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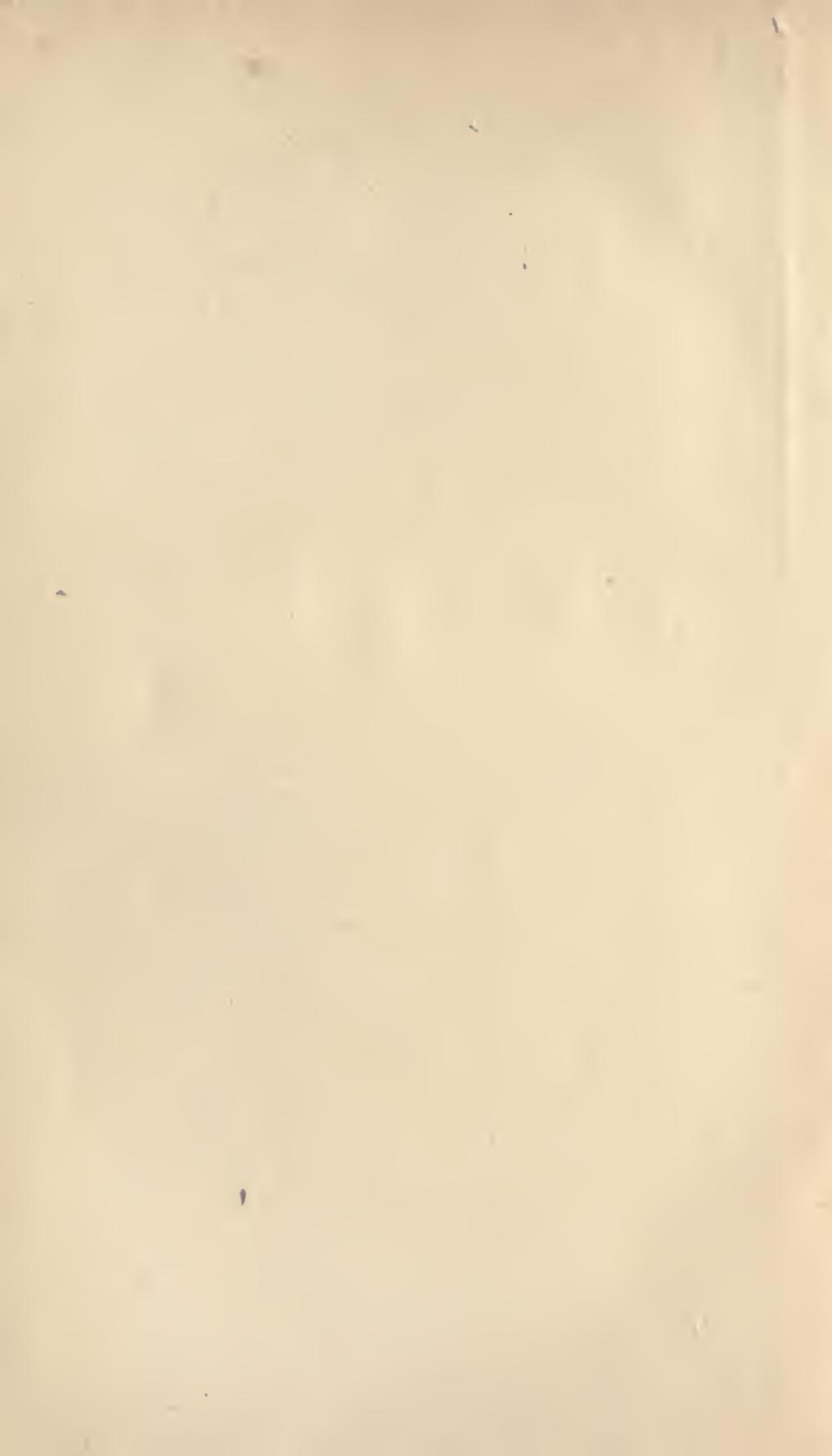
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Be of Good Cheer

WITH

OTHER SERMONS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

BY

GEORGE MOOAR.



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NOTE.

These sermons, solicited for publication by members of my latest pastoral charge, have been selected under the guidance of a suggestion made by a former parishioner and friend who, several years ago, remarked, "My experience leads me to think that most people in our churches need a great deal of encouragement."

The author of these sermons, it may be proper to add, was born in Andover, Mass., May 27, 1830; pastor of the South Church, in his native town, 1855-61; of the First Congregational Church, Oakland, Cal., 1861-72; and of the Plymouth Avenue Church, in the same city, 1874-89.

By reason of the kindly appreciation of his hearers in these three parishes, he has had often occasion to thank God and take courage.

Pacific Theological Seminary,
May 27, 1889.



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I.

BE OF GOOD CHEER.

“And the night following the Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer.”—Acts 23:11.

PAUL justified his title to the name of an apostle on the ground that he also had seen the risen Lord. If the occasion referred to in our text was one of the occasions on which he claimed to have seen the Master, we may point out one coincidence which has no little weight in making Paul's claim appear natural. For we may show that one word spoken to Paul that night was a characteristic word of Jesus. The Lord stood by him and said: “Be of good cheer.” What other word would it have been so natural for the Divine Master to utter? This will appear, and the lesson involved in it will become manifest, if I mention the other occasions on which the Saviour used this identical word, which is rendered in our version: “Be of good cheer.”

The first scene is that of the palsied man at Capernaum. On arriving in his own city, there

was brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed. The crowd was so great the sick man could not be got near. Even the room about the door was thronged. Accordingly they bore the invalid to the top of the house and thence let him down at the feet of the wondrous healer. We are led to infer that both by reason of disease and from some special sense of unworthiness, this sufferer's face wore a look of weariness and deep despondency. The expectation of recovery was gone. He may have wondered at the confident zeal of the friends who would persist in bearing him into the presence of the miracle-worker. It may be that persons in the crowd looked as if it were in them to say, how simple, if not impertinent, it was for your friends to worry your poor frame by bringing you here! But the Master's eye no sooner fell upon the man than he said: "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee."

The second scene is that of the woman who touched the hem of his garment. For twelve years, we are told, disease had wasted her strength. The money spent on physicians had been thrown away, her case being nothing bettered, but rather grown worse. In the mass of people which pressed the Master, this woman

secretly and painfully mingles, aiming to get near enough to touch, if possible, the garment he wore. At last, her finger touches the hem. She feels in her body the strange but blessed sensation of being healed. She allows the throng to sway her back, as a wave recedes on the ocean beach. Still she carries with her the feeling that some how she may have seemed rather to have stolen than asked the favor. The question, "Who has touched me?" strikes sharply upon her sensitive mind. It brings her, full of undefined fear, in the presence of her benefactor. Does her heart fail her lest he blame her? "But Jesus, turning and seeing her, said, daughter, be of good cheer; thy faith has made thee whole."

The third scene is that in which he was beheld walking on the sea. The multitudes have gone away. The evening has fully come. The Master and his disciples are separated. He is in the mountain for prayer. Their ship is laboring heavily in a tempestuous sea. Darkness, storm and danger increase every moment. To the consternation of the disciples, they see the appearance of one as if walking on the furious water. Their imagination makes it a spirit. The courage, which might battle with wind and waves, fails them in the presence of a power of the air. They

utter the shriek of uttermost fear. In contrast with the uproar of the elements, and the uproar, too, of perturbed human souls, listen, as to music coming over still water, to that calm, firm voice: "Be of good cheer; It is I. Be not afraid." The picture of that scene must have remained painted on the vision of those disciples; the tones of that voice must have lingered long in their ears. In many a more tempestuous sea of temptation and persecution they must have recalled this word and rejoiced in its inspiration.

Such a sea was tossing wildly for them—and this is the fourth scene—on the night of the crucifixion. It was a long storm then setting in. In the hush before the great shock of it should be felt, we find the disciples listening to the Master with new, anxious, intense, and yet vague apprehension. He is to leave them. He is to leave them to wage the war of his kingdom alone. He is to be betrayed by one from their own number. The priests and scribes are to do what they please with him. They themselves are to bend and well nigh break under the pitiless tempest which begins already to mutter around the corners of the house in which they have eaten the passover. The cock shall hardly crow before one, and he the chiefest, shall deny the Lord. There these eleven

men are sitting, and the shadow and shiver of the coming events fall over them. They are numbed and unnerved. They had not been girded for such a conflict. The Master casts them out into the great, cruel world. There, he says, ye shall have tribulation. But in the very moment and syllable in which he casts them forth, he utters his favorite word: "Be of good cheer." Those men slept so soundly in the watch of that night, or went away so far from him in the break of the morning, that they lost for a time the encouragement of this word. But that encouragement came back, how often it has come back to weak and tempted disciples since: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

It came to Paul in the castle, which we may now reckon as the fifth occasion in which the Master spoke this favorite word. Paul had gone up to Jerusalem after his third missionary journey. His enemies found him in the temple. With the convulsive quickness of a mob, they had dragged him from the sacred place and commenced beating him in the outer court. Under the protection of military arrest, he spoke to them in his own defense. But that defense only infuriated them. They were mad for his blood. But the great work among the churches would suffer, if he were killed

The dominant influences working in the world were not only against him; those influences despised him and his cause. What was he, one lone man, in the face of all that was against him? He lay down in the castle. Who else but the Lord could it be who should stand by him and say: "Be of good cheer, as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also in Rome."

Would you know the secret of Paul's flow of spirits from that day onward? Whether before Felix or Festus or Agrippa or at Cæsar's court? See him in the midst of the shipwreck, calm, brave, vigilant. Hear him, an ignoble prisoner standing forth in the midst of the two hundred and seventy-six souls, use almost the identical term he had heard from the Master. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer—wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer. Listen, as on the fourteenth day of their fasting, he takes bread and gives thanks to God before them all. Watch that motley mass as they catch heart from this wonderful fellow-passenger. "Then were they all of good cheer?" Follow him, as he leaves the vessel and wends his way to the imperial city. Make note that on his arrival at Three Taverns, thirty-three miles from Rome, he thanked God and took courage (*tharsos*, cheer). For a long time he is chained to a

soldier. A man of intensely active habits, he is confined within the narrow circuit of his prison. His friends, one by one, leave him. Some of them, alas, not only fail him, but fail the cause also. "Only Luke is with me."

"Look in once more,
The saint is in his bonds again,
Save that his hopes more boldly soar,
He and his lot unchanged remain!"

Yes, his hopes do more boldly soar. For these are among the expressions which occur in his latest Epistles: "I am now ready to be offered. I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. "I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness." "The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and will save me unto his heavenly kingdom, to whom be the glory forever and ever, amen." With such words on his lips, the great apostle passes the valley of the shadow of martyrdom. What, I was asking, was the secret of this high flowing spirit, in the midst of age, loneliness, desertion, imprisonment, care of all the churches? Our text answers the question. His Lord stood by him and he heard again and again this favorite word of the Master, saying, Be of good cheer, Paul.

I cannot think it merely a pleasant coincidence that on these five critical occasions our Lord should be reported to us as using this same word. We are entitled to conclude that the word marks a signal characteristic in the Son of Man. He was here to encourage man in the path of righteousness. So it was predicted of him long before he came to earth in those beautiful words of Isaiah, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." And again, "He shall not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth." And if we recollect the familiar narratives of the gospel in the light of this repeated word, confirmations of this characteristic will spring up on every side. His quick recognition of faith, his open, full, glad recognition of it, whether in centurion of Rome or woman of Canaan, supplies evidence. His appreciation of a cup of cold water, of the two mites of the poor woman, of the love shown by the woman who was a sinner, his kindly attitude toward the despised classes of his time reveal this trait. So also his words by the bier at Nain, at the grave of Lazarus, to the thief on the cross. Indeed it might well be claimed that

one great reason why the divine Lord became flesh and dwelt among us was, that he might be able to say in hearty human words to the multitudes of earth who labor and are heavy laden, Come unto me and I will give you rest.

And this view of Christ brings him into close and dear relations with most of us. It was stated in the papers that some gentleman in St. Louis willed his entire property, estimated at two million dollars, to a person, because that person years before had, by a little confidence and a loan, encouraged him when he was greatly embarrassed. Plenty of people we have known who, when we were in difficulty, stood off, chilling us by their indifference, distrust or censure. They may have been righteous, yet scarcely for a righteous man will one die. But the neighbor, teacher, pastor, who, when we were setting out in life, spoke the hearty good word to us or for us and bade us substantial God speed in any worthy undertaking, he has a warm place in our hearts. When we return to the old places and meet him again, we greet him with no common grasp. If he lie in the old church yard, walking leisurely and pensively through the sacred grounds, we shall read the name on the head-stone with dimmed eyes. For it is good to be encouraged. It is at this quick tender point of the



human feeling that God in Christ meets us. We stand in the close crowd where they are letting down the palsied man, or move in the dense throng through which the woman touches the hem of the Master's garment, or we toil, faint with rowing, on the little Galilean lake, or we sit in the upper room under the oppressive sense of impending evil, or we lie in the castle, prisoners, images of possible disaster gathering in the brain—these are symbols of the life we live,—but in the varied conditions the Christ of the gospel stands beside us. He is never at loss for one word. It comes spontaneously to his lips, Be of good cheer.

But let me hasten to note that in each case in which our Lord used this word, he gave reason for using it. The cheery voice stood for a cheery reality. "If," argues St. James, "a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be you warmed and fed: notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" It was no wordy encouragement which came to the palsied man. When the Master said to him, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," there were those standing round who were ready to think that this was something more easily said than done; for to forgive a man his sins belongs

to God alone, and though Jesus might say it, yet who could verify it? But soon came a declaration which everybody could verify. But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath authority on earth to forgive sins, arise, take up thy bed and go to thine house. And he arose and departed to his own house. The cheering words of one who could send a palsied man home healed, carrying his bed with him, were spirit and life. So also, the diseased woman was not merely talked to, she had been made whole. The anxious disciples in the storm, too, heard the master say, "It is I; be not afraid," but more than that happened, "When he was come into the ship the wind ceased." On the night of the betrayal, likewise, a wonderful reason was given why the disciples should take heart: "I have overcome the world." Nor was Paul left with a vague exhortation to cheerfulness; he was given a particular and definite promise, that his imprisonment would enable him to bear the witness he loved so well within the walls of the great capital of the Roman world. Yes, Christ's gracious words, in each case, stood for gracious realities. When he said cheer, the cheering fact was on its way. How often we have seen some well intentioned doctors tell us to dismiss our fears with respect to some friend stricken

with disease, "There is no serious illness, she will be well in a few days." But we have sometimes failed to dismiss our fears. Courage and the light heart would not come, because we were not sure the doctor knew what he was affirming. For cheery words must have the backing of facts. They must come from one who has knowledge or power to bring things to pass. But the great Physician in whom we trust has never failed during these nineteen centuries to reward the courage which his spoken promises have inspired.

The uses of this theme we have now been following are not far to seek. Little need to make formal mention of them. But I would like to have this theme leave on your minds pleasant impressions of Christ, our Lord. How our faces light up, when, talking together of some friend, now absent, we say to each other, Do you remember such and such favorite words he used to speak? Those favorite words are like a right natural expression preserved in a portrait. So does not this word *tharsei*, call up within us a picture of the Lord, which we can carry with us and never lose? Surely it will give a vast deal of help to us to think of Christ in this light. He is the being, who beyond all others, has the disposition and the power to cheer human hearts. That, indeed, is

what makes him have his hold on the world. For we are all passing, or have just passed, or are soon to pass through some experience, like that of the children of Israel, "when they journeyed from Mount Hor by the way of the Red Sea, and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way." We need to be assured that he who has been lifted up and passed through the heavens, is still touched with the feeling of our infirmities and has great store of courage for us which will never fail us.

I would like to have you note also that Christ imparts to those who follow him, the same spirit of encouragement which he possessed himself. It is astonishing how much many of us lack this spirit. It is so much easier for many people to criticise, find fault, tell what people ought to do, and throw cold water on smoking flax. It was so with the twelve disciples at first. They acted as a kind of body-guard to their Master. They looked frigidly on the mothers who would bring the little children to him. They were not gracious to that Syro-Phenician woman. *Send her away: for she crieth after us.*" But particularly suggestive is the account given of what took place, when Bartimeus the blind man called so earnestly upon the Saviour for help. Many, it is said, rebuked him

that he should hold his peace. But Jesus said, call ye him. And they not only called him, but, what is specially to be remarked, they took up the Master's own word and made it theirs. For they said now, Be of good cheer, arise, he calleth thee. They say it, because their Master had said it before them. His influence transforms them. Instead of belonging to the multitude who hinder those who would come out of blindness and darkness and sorrow, they themselves become angels of comfort and help. So the favorite words of the Master pass into the familiar speech of his church. They are caught up and carried down the centuries.

Surely, our study teaches us, that we should be encouraged Christians, for we have in Christ a strong friend; we should be encouraging Christians, for our fellow-men need all the cheer we can possibly give them in the way of righteousness; we should become Christians, if we are not such. Else you will only hold back or hold others back; you will look on and see men needing moral help and you will have hard work to say or do anything to help them. Your years will run fast away and though you may meet with scores and hundreds who want incentive and aid in order to live a good life or die a peaceful death, yet you will come

to your end, and, looking back, have to confess that you have not encouraged anybody to live more worthily or die more triumphantly. But once in Christ yourself, you will find that he gives you from time to time the satisfaction, like which there is no other, the satisfaction of bringing good cheer into the moral and eternal life of the world.

II.

THE SENSITIVE VERACITY OF JESUS.

“If it were not so, I would have told you.”—JOHN 14:2.

LITTLE things reveal character. Coleridge said that one could discover that a man was a gentleman by just the few words he would speak during the moments he was standing under a common shelter from a sudden summer shower. There is a very certain, though not easily defined, difference between an ordinarily true and a specially true man. An eminent botanist pronounced it impossible to make a definition of an oak which should distinguish it from all chestnuts; or a definition of a chestnut which should distinguish it from all oaks. But when the botanist was asked, Would you ever mistake in calling an oak a chestnut or a chestnut an oak, the reply was, never. He might not formulate the difference, he could recognize at once.

Now, I think, one will get the impression at once from this single clause that Christ was in no ordinary sense and degree trustworthy; and

that word stands for a quality than which it were difficult to mention one more excellent.

Jesus was comforting the disciples in their grief over his impending departure. He is telling them that though they cannot follow him now, they will follow him by and by. He assures them that in the Father's house whither he is returning there are many dwellings. Just here he drops this brief remark, "If it were not so, I would have told you." What a disclosure there is in this one remark of that quality of character in him, on which one may rely without hesitation and to the utmost, because he is one who feels the value of truth and could not, either wilfully or heedlessly, leave the disciples building on an unfounded hope !

Suppose, then, for a few moments, that the Master could have given any one of the following turns instead of this given in our text.

Thus, suppose him to have said, It may not be so ; but it makes no great difference whether it be so or not. It is of no particular account what any one believes about a future state. One is neither better nor worse because of belief or disbelief. You can go on and be faithful to the moral principles which I laid down in my mountain sermon, even should there be no mansions



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for you in any heavenly country. Indeed, faithfulness to right and truth, without any expectation of any future felicity may be better. Your virtue will not be tarnished by suspicion of being done for a reward. Do we not discern instantly the chasm which separates the mind which can think in this cold and indifferent way, from the mind of the Master? "I would have told you," for the truth on this subject is not a matter of slight importance to me. Let men, like Pontius Pilate, ask derisively or despairingly, What is truth, to me it is beyond estimate precious. If there were no heavenly mansions, I would not have alluded to the prospects of them.

Or, suppose the great Teacher to have given this turn: There may not be really any such home in the Father's house, but the prospect seems to comfort you; if it be only a dream, yet the dream is pleasant to entertain; I would not take it ruthlessly out of your faith; it may help you to sustain coming trials; no harm can come of it; some time perhaps you will be advanced in your ideas and will not need it. How different is the tone of such a theory from that of the actual Christ! If heaven were not to be, I would say so. If it were only a pleasant dream, you should know it. Just now, when

Peter was dreaming about his willingness to lay down his life for my sake, did I not say to him, Why, Peter, before the cock crow, you will deny me three times? Could I cut down that pleasing complacency in Simon's mind and let this delusion, if it were a delusion, linger unrebuked in your thoughts?

Again, suppose our Lord to have said, in an undertone, I do not myself see any firm ground for affirming any Father's house with many mansions providing for individual and personal immortality, but the affirmation has had undeniably a good effect upon mankind; it has stimulated virtue in ordinary men. Therefore, it is such a tenet as may be indulged on account of its proved usefulness. Such is well known to have been the final position of an eminent English philosopher of our own generation. Immortality, reasoned this wise man, cannot be proven beyond reasonable doubt, but as it is a wholesome doctrine on the whole, the hope of it may be indulged. Plainly this is not the tone of the prophet of Nazareth. If I did not know that there are dwellings prepared on high for your individual home, I would have told you. Here is trustworthiness resting not merely on veracity, but upon actual knowledge.

I may suggest one other possible turn which

might have been substituted for this of the text. Suppose our Lord to have said, If this beautiful doctrine of heaven shall finally prove unreal, I do not hold myself responsible for the issue; it may prove true; it may prove untrue; take your own risks about it. There might seem a blunt rough honesty in so disposing of the matter, but such veracity is hollow or heartless as compared with the tone of our Lord's actual utterance. If it were not so, I would have told you. I should consider myself bound to tell you. I could not regard it honorable in me as a special religious teacher to throw these risks upon you. I take the risks myself. I hold myself responsible for the reality of the pictures which I have drawn of the heavenly home.

The four suppositions, now made, will have served their purpose, if they have helped to bring out to any other mind the impression which has been again and again fastened upon my own by reason of this single line of our text. This single line flashes instantly upon one's thought the impression of our Lord's careful, strong, delicate and affectionate trustworthiness. But this quality of character, though revealed in these few words, is by no means confined to them. The gentleman may be disclosed as such by the one

question or answer that he makes during the patterning of the summer shower, but that is because his culture has become a part of himself and he divests himself of it nowhere and at no time. Our attention may be drawn to it on the slight occasion, but once we have seen it, we shall never cease to see it. So when I read this clause, I say to myself, How admirably these words suggest the perfect reliableness of my Saviour! But the moment this suggestion passes my lips, it seems also as if all the sacred pages were written to set forth this particular grace. Indeed, it may well seem so, for trustworthiness is not a single grace. When one speaks, for instance, of the trustworthiness of a bridge, say, such a one as spans the Mississippi at St. Louis, that is the grand thing about it, that, day or night, when streams are low and streams are high and mad with terrific currents, in wind and rain and scorching heat, the great structure has committed to it the burden of rich harvests and of a continental commerce and of human lives; and the first, middle, last thing demanded of it is that it be worthy of confidence. But though that be the one grand requisite in the bridge, yet how many things go together to make up that requisite. The granite that lies deep down in the treacherous bed of the

river, the piers that bear the weight and pressure of the whole, the truss work of steel, the various pieces of material which have been wrought one by one and fitted each to its place, all go to make the bridge safe. So, what is there in our Lord's complete person, what grace or power of nature or growth, which does not enter into his perfectness as an object of human trust? But it is always a great source of confidence regarding any massive structure reared by men's hands, if we find that the responsible persons engaged upon it were themselves distinctly conscious of the problem which they had undertaken to work out. For, after all, in the most important sense, the St. Louis bridge was put and held in its place by the engineer who planned it. His brains and knowledge and trusty character were its support. So the trustworthiness of Jesus Christ is the foundation on which the salvation of this world is built. All the travel to the celestial country passes over his person. No question, therefore, is so vital as this: Did he fully understand that which he had undertaken? Did he consciously and distinctly appreciate the strain that would come on his trustiness? He assumed the greatest task ever assumed in this world. Bridges and ship canals are as nothing to

this work. Did he assume it as one who felt to the quick the demands which it made on him?

Now, if anyone will go through the New Testament with these questions in mind, he will be impressed with the affirmative answer given to them there. From beginning to end it is manifest that the Redeemer understands and feels that a pressure is on him, which needs to be sustained by utter and extraordinary trustworthiness.

Remark, then, as you pass along these pages, how prominent the grace of truthfulness is made. He is the only begotten of the Father, "full of grace and truth." "Ye seek to kill me, a man that told you the truth." "Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." So, in the chapter before us, "I am the truth." In the presence of Pilate also, what majestic words are these in answer to the question, "Art thou a King, then?" "Thou sayest I am a King; for this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my words." This quality in him impressed itself in a special manner upon the mind of the apostle, John. In the midst of the false and the unreliable, John had only to lift his eyes and he beheld again "the true and faithful witness." How often in the book of Reve-

lation does this epithet flash forth ! In that grand scene, for example, when he sees heaven opened and the Redeemer ride forth, at the head of the armies of heaven, the long columns of saints following their leader on white horses, themselves clothed in fine linen, white and clean, the name that is first applied to him is "Faithful and true." Now, it is much to me, in reading the Scriptures, which invite continually to the exercise of faith, to find that the being in whom especially this faith is to be reposed, is represented as having the very quality which corresponds to faith. You ask your friend returning from New York, What impression did you get regarding that bridge-work that has been doing to unite New York and Brooklyn ? If he answer, the impression fastened on me concerning it was its prodigious strength ; the more closely I examined, the more I felt that this was devised by some one who meant that it should last and be safe forever. If that be your friend's answer, it is such an answer as one would like to hear. But this is the impression which a careful reading of this New Testament will induce. Why, whatever else may be affirmed of the Lord who is described therein, one trait stands forth clear, he made a specialty of the truth.

There was one point in his claims, in respect to which the strain on him would be especially severe. For he ventured to guarantee to all men who trusted in him, forgiveness of sins, restoration to divine favor and to everlasting life. But the natural and reasonable feeling was expressed by the Jews when they said, Who can forgive sins but God only? For it is sun-clear that nobody can make such guarantee as Christ makes, unless he have extraordinary divine authority. But just this is what the Master claims. It is a stupendous claim. It is nothing less than the claim to span the abyss which separates the infinite from the finite ; to combine in himself divine and human power ; while standing on the shores of time to have instant, constant and potent unity with him who inhabiteth eternity. "No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." Now, plainly, at this point the pressure on Christ's trustworthiness becomes severe. But it is precisely at this point, where the strain is so tense that it might seem as if the entire Christian structure would snap any moment and drop out of its high place into nothingness, right at this point that I see the veracity of Christ is careful, unhesitating, clear.

He is aware that this claim is high. He knows that it must be challenged; that men may feel constrained to say, Why, this is absurd; this is impossible; this, at the least, is improbable. Nevertheless, he persistently links himself with his Father, as no other being could presume to do. "Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." It is manifest that Christ is not propounding a doctrine about the future life, but he is affirming what he knows about his Father's house and what he is able and going to prepare there. This becomes the more evident when, in the ninth verse immediately following, he makes that wonderful answer to Philip, "Have I been so long time with you and dost thou not know me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." As I ponder over these and similar declarations, there grows upon me the thought, suggested by the single line of our text. Yes, we may be sure that, if these great facts were not so, this person, who is so exceptionally true, would have said so. For he is not merely honest as the world goes, but he belongs within that inner circle of those to whom truth is sacred, who could not, if they

would, and would not, if they could, do or say anything which would deceive. Say rather, he is himself the centre and life of that circle. Every one that has this character is a child of light, of "that light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." All that we have imagined possible in trustworthiness is realized in him.

Of course, out of such a theme as this I might draw nearly all the practical lessons pertaining to the Christian experience. For what is there of Christian grace or strength that does not root itself in the trustworthiness of the King of the Church?

But I may at least bring out and place in full view that definition of the word, faith, which needs to be kept clear in the minds of men in our confused time. Believe in God; believe also in me. This is the activity named in immediate connection. But what is faith? It is simply trust in one who is trustworthy. It is not opinion. It is more like the courage of conviction. It is not credulity, It is not "going it blind." It is not trust simply, without regard to the person in whom the confidence is to be reposed. It is trust in one in whom we have good, and, as we have seen, specially good reason to confide. The faith in Christ, to which we are so much exhorted, is the most natural of

all moral acts and the one most utterly rational. Faith and reason are as completely in harmony as the eye and the sunlight.

We may see, also, how faith is to be had and increased. It is by enlightenment and exercise. We become acquainted with Christ as he is given to us in the Word; he makes the impression of being reliable; we test him as far as we can do so, and the conviction deepens. We treat him as we do reliable persons. We grow in his grace, as you grow at rest respecting the trains that take you to and fro over the continent. We see the locomotive is strong; built expressly for its work; that it carries hundreds and thousands of people daily and safely. We have come to rest in it; we take our trips with hardly a thought of solicitude; we arrange all our business on the strength of our confidence; buy property and build homes on the basis of it. So our faith grows by knowing him on whom we trust and treating him as if he were worthy of confidence.

We may see, too, how it is that the Christian doctrine of immortality is not a doctrine simply, but an assurance. Dr. Thomas Hill tells us that on a certain occasion he had read to a friend the report of a scene which occurred in the Natural Academy of Science. The superintendent of the

coast survey had read a paper on some abstruse mathematical topic; Agassiz rose and said, "Mr. President, I confess I do not know one word of this communication, but I have had heretofore such ample reasons for believing in the speaker's clearness and soundness of thought, that I accept what he has now said as undoubtedly true and of great practical value." "That," rejoined Dr. Hill's friend, "is just the way I do with respect to Jesus and the immortal life. I have seen and do see so many proofs of the wonderful wisdom and clearness of thought and holiness of character in him, that when he says these things are true of the future life, I believe they are true." The Christian attitude indeed, with reference to all the promises is like that of Dr. Livingstone as exhibited in that story of him when his life was placed in imminent peril by the threatening presence of hostile bands. He made all the provision that he could make, and then lay down to rest in confident reliance on the providence of God. For, said he, "The promises of Divine care are made on the word of a gentleman of the most delicate honor, Jesus Christ, and that's end of it." The word of Christ is the end of it with us also.

In respect, likewise, to the solemn questions which relate to impenitent souls in the future

world, this perfect and delicate trustiness of the Redeemer brings its impressive lesson. For he who tells us that there are many mansions in the Father's house has pictured the loss, the death, which are the wages of sin hereafter. There are many who will be glad to think of his word as so delicately sure when he refers to the home of the blest. But we must not count him trusty, when he prophesies pleasant things, and treat him as evasive, equivocal, so discounting his reliability, when he predicts the peril of unbelief. If he is sensitively trustworthy in one case, he must be equally so in the other. No theologian or preacher worthy of the name, warns against the second death, because the thought of such an issue is pleasant to his mind. But there it stands, outlined by the true and faithful witness. We know it must be a real danger, for if it were not so, he would not have told us that it is.

Every aspect of this theme also impresses this final lesson, that they who are the professed disciples of such a Master will be themselves trustworthy. Critics have sometimes discussed the question whether in the word, faith, the radical idea is trust or trustiness; whether a man should be called a believer because he confides in Christ, or because he is of such stuff that Christ confides



in him. But the full Biblical view is that the believer becomes trusty by reason of his trust in the trustworthy Redeemer. When Peter said: "Thou art the Christ," the Master replied, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build my church." Building on the Rock, one becomes of a piece with it. True faith grows into faithfulness. Resting on him who is the truth, we become people on whose word the world may rely, people who can be trusted in the business and intercourse of earth as well as in the Father's house above. In those parts of the oriental world where English and American missionaries labor, they and the natives who profess to follow their teachings are proverbially spoken of as the religionists who do not lie, whose word may be taken for all it naturally means. That is a gratifying tribute. But the wonder is that any follower of such a Master as Christ should deserve, or even seem to deserve, any different tribute. "I have no greater joy," wrote the Apostle John, "than to hear that my children walk in truth." We, who are parents, pastors, teachers, can have no greater joy.

III.

THE UNAPPROPRIATED GOOD.

“Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip ?”—JOHN 14: 9.

PHILIP had now been three years with Jesus. Yet he had not discovered that Jesus was so related to the Father, that whoever had seen the Son of Man, had seen, so far as finite vision can see, the Infinite Father. What a world there was in Philip's Master which it had not entered into the disciple's mind to conceive ! Let our theme be the unappropriated good there is in Christ.

1. The fact of much good lying near one and yet for a long time unused is a common fact. At least two hundred generations of men have lived in the presence of this material world; but there are wonderful powers and useful properties in nature which have been brought to light only within a few years. So familiar to us is this fact, that we keep ourselves all the time astonished at the ignorance of the ages which have been before us. It used to be therefore a healthful antidote to

our modern complacency when some of us, in our younger days, used to hear Wendell Phillips lecture, perhaps at the hundredth repetition, on the Lost Arts, and show to us that the ancients knew some secrets of nature which the men of the nineteenth century have utterly failed to reclaim. Our subject does not require us to champion either the past or the present. They who glorify the age we live in and those who look fondly back to some golden days of antiquity, alike testify to the fact that it is the most common thing for us to live very close to realities and beauties and utilities, of which we have no perception. Multitudes of men, thirty years ago, roamed about California for gold and never dreamed that it would produce the finest wheat. There have been critics who, looking upon the present barrenness of the Holy Land, have argued that that land could not possibly have sustained the population and amassed the wealth which make famous the epoch of Solomon. The exhumed ruins of the oriental world have refuted the argument. Those ruins therefore declare that through long centuries the Moslem and the Christian alike have been living in a country whose resources are vast; the power of appropriation only has been wanting. Our ears are

dinned so much with the thesis that the peculiar physical geography, yes, the geology of a country, makes its history, that we forget the other thesis, which may as truly be maintained, that the history of many lands has been poor, because the races which inhabited them have lost, or never had, grip on the generous nature of things which surrounded them. The political economist, when he discusses the situation in Ireland, turns his eyes away to portions of the island, where the land is equally, where it may be much, inferior. There, he says, the peasant owns his homestead. "The magic of property turns the sand into gold." How much sand there is which has not received this golden transmutation !

It is not, then, a singular fact that there is a great deal of good in Christ which men have not made their own. He has been a long time in the world ; yet the world has not really known him. His light has shined many years in the darkness, but the darkness has comprehended it not. When one is reading the story of the middle ages, he sees the processions of crusaders go and come ; they move in thousands ; Europe seems nothing but a camp of men wearing the cross ; Christ's name is on every lip. But a sober reader of the New Testament finds it diffi-

cult to recognize the lineaments of the Master in the great mass of these devotees. Their bones whitened on the holy fields of Palestine, but their deeds were as if they had never known the sacred name they bore. One may see, too, even now, jeweled crosses worn on the persons of men and women, but it will often sadden him to be compelled to judge that these persons have seen scarcely anything in the cross, except the jewel, which is wonderful or potent to them.

2. Yet common, commonplace even, as is this fact of unappropriated good, it is nevertheless startling. To take a familiar example from the trade of the world. Within a short period, petroleum has become one of the great staples. Its lights are kindled in every part of the globe, as often as evening returns. The amount of this product yielded from flowing wells has been simply enormous. The uses in the arts are manifold. It is not, however, startling to think that for thirty-five years before 1854, those fountains were known to exist in the neighborhood of the upper waters of the Ohio, and yet for thirty-five years they remained almost unused! Men owned farms which covered fabulous wealth, but were unconscious of it.

Let us cite an equally familiar, while more

startling, example from Christian biography. When John Wesley returned from his missionary tour to America, he had been living a strict religious life for sixteen or seventeen years. He had been the inspiration of the Holy Club of students at Oxford. Yet, he writes in his journal, I went to America to convert the Indians, but O, who shall convert me? He deplores his low moral condition. He has no joy of divine acceptance. What a strange thing it is that such a man, who is described by one historian as "of healthful temperament, of rare intelligence, of logical astuteness, who had read every line of Holy Scripture in the very language in which prophet or apostle had penned it," that such a man, after many years of diligent search, should be stumbling over the very cross on which his salvation had been worked out! A few days after this sad confession was made, he appropriated one verse of the familiar words of Christ, which a woman repeated in his hearing, and instantly his soul sprang into marvellous light, liberty and power. In that single verse he ate the bread in the strength of which he went preaching for fifty-three years. But that bread had been in his mouth, we must suppose also in his very heart, yet he had not tasted this sweet-

ness and power before. He had lived with hardly a partition, only a thin veil, between him and the large room of his Redeemer's favor, and yet had never entered that room. Time and again, his foot was on the threshold, the door itself was ajar, still he continued to forego the open privileges of his Father's house.

Some of our pioneers tell us how near they were to being rich. They were just about to buy a piece of land which is now worth millions of dollars. They go back in their thoughts and almost tremble to think into what close neighborhood they came to the millionaires. But one's heart must be more tremulous when he reflects that not once, but many times he has been not far from the Kingdom of God! This is the thought which in Lowell's poem, "Extreme Unction," rings on like a knell. In the poem are the words supposed to be used by one who has come to death's door, a mere worldling. To have come thither, earthly and unspiritual, notwithstanding the fact that "Christ still was wandering o'er the earth," to recollect that his hands have held all along "the keys of darkness and of morn"—

" Mine held them once; I flung away
Those keys that might have open set
The golden sluices of the day,
But clutch the keys of darkness yet;"

to have had Christ's good within our reach and all its wealth ready to fall into our hands and to find those hands empty, that is indeed a startling thought.

For while the thought of unappropriated good in Christ is startling, that is partly because it most commonly is also reproachful. Was there not the tone of reproach in the question which the Master addressed to Philip? "Have I been so long time with you and yet thou hast not known me, Philip?" The implication is that the disciple might have been expected to know more.

A friend may expect his friends to discover more quickly than others what is good in him. Will they not have an intuitive insight of his worth? They do not require him to unfold in detail and labored explanation all his excellence. A look, the tones of the voice, the trivial act disclose the secret. To St. Paul, the "riches of Christ" were "unsearchable." To "win Christ" and "the excellency of the knowledge" of him, he counted all things else loss. His great desire respecting his followers was that they might "comprehend what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." These are very warm expressions. They indicate some marvellous good which is hidden to

many eyes. But it is not for want of mere vision that a man does not perceive the beauty of the Yosemite Valley. There must be a deeper defect. So the explanation which in the Bible underlies the failure on the part of men to apprehend Christian truth is moral. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." When therefore we speak of unappropriated good we imply some fault of the heart. This it is which so often draws the vail over our eyes whether we are reading the Old or the New Testament.

The Master himself expressed his surprise at the appreciation given him by foreigners. How often a similar surprise has brought, by comparison, reproach to those who bear the Christian name! We sometimes find citizens of alien birth, who are more ardently and intelligently American than those born and trained on our own soil. If that be to the credit of the foreigner, it is not to the honor of some among our own people. When I go into a neighbor's house and find that the unlettered servant, even though he be a Chinaman, has an appreciation of Christ, which his master and master's family have not, I blush. Cases are on record of eminent scholars, who though trained in the University, were unable to spell; some little child might easily correct them. Difficult

as English spelling is, no such scholar could wholly escape the feeling of shame. But how much more frequent it is for men and women in our day to make even a boast of culture, to acquire a deserved name for scholarship in the sciences and arts, and yet to miss of knowing Christ as their own Saviour. Classmates of these very persons go forth and in the name of Christ redeem ignorant and debased races, so that they become clothed and in their right mind, but these persons themselves live without faith and die without hope. I withhold no tribute of admiration or of personal indebtedness which is due to a woman like George Eliot, or a man like Thomas Carlyle, but it must ever remain a mortification that their eyes were holden so that they did not see Christ in the fullness of his person and the beneficence of his working as the Divine Saviour of the world.

But if in one point of view the thought of unappropriated good in Christ is reproachful, in another it is stimulating. The good is in him. It waits to be made our own.

It was and still is the dismal theory of some reasoners in social science, that the time must come when in the increase of the world's population, the earth cannot sustain its inhabitants, and starvation, freezing and what not must ensue.

But we are learning more and more that the earth has a vast amount of undiscovered resources. As fast as the exigencies of the race require new supplies, the earth seems to have hidden within its heart those very supplies. While men have been calculating just how long the present known coal fields will hold out, new deposits have been discovered. There is reason to suppose that for the purposes of human existence, our globe is practically inexhaustible. Such a supposition is a wonderful incentive to enterprise and progress. It is possible to fall to musing about the thinkers who have gone before us in such a way as to be discouraged. For we may say, those men have exhausted the fields of thought. But that is not the way the young investigators feel. To them, the world is not like the worn-out diggings which disfigure our mining scenery. It is full of virgin mines, richer than any which have been opened in former centuries.

A similar thought impels the disciples of Christ. For in him are still hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge in the realm of the religious and moral life of men. He is still the one person who actually saves sinners from sin. His power to do this is as full and inexhaustible to-day as it was eighteen centuries ago. His name is efficient

among more millions of the human family than it was ever before. His is the one really advancing religion of our age. Despite, too, all the theologies which have been written, and the creeds which have been framed, the Christ of whom we read in the Gospels and whose doctrine was further unfolded in the Epistles, is greater than the theologies and the creeds. The student who would be freshest and most affective, is always the one who goes back to the historical redeemer, who drinks not so much from any stream as from the fountain.

If there be so much latent good in Christ, it shows a miserable poverty of appreciation to settle down early with the conceit of a finished education. Perhaps the saddest thought a pastor has springs up in connection with school anniversaries. It is the thought that so many who leave school will never really study any more. They go to buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, plying various industries and vocations, but they never set themselves patiently and ardently to learn any more of the secrets of God's world. It is not pleasant for me to think so even concerning one's geography or history. But it is irrepressibly painful to think so concerning one's knowledge of God and the divine life. Yet it has been given me to be so sanguine and hopeful with

respect to many a young scholar; she seemed to have so much promise; her religious life would certainly grow so beautiful; but it has been given me to see all that promise blighted by the first touch of this coarse vain life that roars so greedily about us. To advance no more; to be stunted; to have the old look of the dwarf come over the face, but to lose the perennial freshness of countenance that comes off the eager and growing soul, that is very hard to see. To speak of finishing one's education in anything is very weak. But to entertain the notion of graduating in Christianity is a profanation. To leave sunday-school or church at fourteen or twenty-one or fifty, as if there were no more for us to gain in that realm, is both shameful and absurd. We reach no age, as individuals or as a race, in which we have outgrown the Christian faith, any more than we reach an age that has outgrown the stars. We may look at both the faith and the stars with better vision. We may sweep the heaven with a telescope or discover their secrets with the spectroscope. But the stars are not dwarfed; they are more wonderful than ever.

Our theme emphasizes the fitness of an expectant mind with reference to our personal religious experience and growth. It is perhaps the

greatest misfortune that can befall the learner to drop down into a dull, unexpectant mood. He may plod, but he has lost inspiration. This danger besets the nominally religious life. For how many seem to stay in the feeling: I am not what I ought to be; my religion is not like a well of water within me; it is not a constant incentive to joyous and holy activity; but then I do not suppose I shall be very different till I die. My friend, there is so much good in Christ that you should and may live in precisely the opposite feeling. Why should you not rather be thinking—Who knows but that to-day, to-night, in the morning of to-morrow, as I shall be about my daily task or in connection with some new burden to be borne, I may fall heir to some special grace, be taken up into the spirit of Christ and made to have light, peace, devotion, higher by many degrees than I have had before? Such things have happened in thousands and millions of lives. Dr. Jessup, of Syria, relates that that peerless American scholar, Dr. Henry B. Smith, told his students that when he was studying in Germany, he fell into a poor, feeble, distracted piety. His struggle with rationalism was sharp and intense. “But,” he said, “in the midst of it all there came before me a vision of Christ, so distinct, sweet, of

Christ as a person, a living, divine and human Saviour, that all shadows were driven away and I never doubted more." Such visions and uplift may come to any of you. It should be expected to come. For the unappropriated good in the Master is so great that giving cannot impoverish him and the possibilities of quickened power from him are beyond measure.

Our theme helps us to courage with reference to the great work of overcoming the world. The task which was waiting for Philip and the rest of the disciples, if it could have been shown to them in all its dimensions and intensity, would have crushed them. There are hours in all thoughtful lives when the very conception of the great Christian undertaking amazes and almost palsies. So many millions to be uplifted and the depth to which they have sunk so very far below the moral height to which the gospel summons them! Our little efforts seem so small. It is like sweeping back the ocean to reform mankind. Multitudes of cultivated minds are accustomed even to sneer at missions, while large groups of zealous men and women, though bearing the Christian message, point to the vanity of supposing that the world will ever be converted by the preaching of the cross. And we might easily fall into this

doubtful habit of looking at the business the Master has put into our hands, unless we catch the suggestion of the inexhaustible resources in the world's Saviour. There is more in him than man has yet known. The surprises of Pentecost will be repeated. For he will not fail nor be discouraged till he has set judgment on the earth. It is like him to do wonders.



IV.

ANOTHER COMFORTER.

“And I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you forever.”—JOHN 14:16.

THE Bible is a revelation: that is to say, it tells us truths about God and our salvation which otherwise we should not know, or should know less perfectly. It is a progressive revelation: that is to say, some truths were revealed at the later periods much more perfectly than at the earlier. This statement is illustrated by the promise of the Comforter mentioned in the text. The reality and working of the Spirit of God were not unknown even to those who read only the book of Genesis. For are we not told in the very first verse that “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters”? But the fuller realization of this power came only when the Saviour had finished the work he wrought in our human flesh.

Now, some persons are disposed to regard these successive disclosures of truth as burdens. They talk as the inferior half of boys and girls do, in

the inferior moods of their conversation, concerning the various studies given them to learn. I wish, says one of these students, that there was no such rule as fractions; but history is my abomination, rejoins another: and, as for grammar, adds a third, it was invented to plague us. Yet, when these children have got so far as to see the connection these studies have with the business or the intercourse and culture of life, they may regard these studies as far greater helps than burdens.

The disciples to whom our text was spoken, might have queried, Is not this a strange time to load us down with mysterious teachings? In this hour of darkness are we to have another addition to our creed? Yes, the creed was to be enlarged; but it was enlarged by adding "another Comforter." Such enlargement might be likened to the addition of the masts and sails to a yacht. Will they not take up room and bring weight, and require time and labor to handle them well? The answer must be, Yes. But much as the masts and sails add to the weight the vessel has to carry, they add many-fold to its speed and power. So I shall hope to show as to the fuller doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

One of the truths contained in this doctrine

is that some spirit, purer and truer than our own, waits to dwell in us. He is holy, the spirit of truth. Have not most of us a good deal of trouble with the spirit that often shows itself in our daily conduct? It is weak, or mean, ungracious, uncomfortable, selfish. It needs association with, the control of, some nobler presence. Far back in the days of ancient Greece, it seemed to that wise man, Socrates, so he was wont to say, as if some voice were speaking to him, the voice of a monitor, a guide wiser than his own mind. When he lay in prison and his friends would tempt him to save his life by escape, he represented himself as hearing arguments that were more persuasive than theirs. They came from this invisible companion. "I seem to hear it murmuring in my ears like the sound of a flute; that voice is humming in my ears and prevents me from hearing any other." But this wise man did not count this voice a hindrance. It elevated his manhood; it gave a strange moral depth to his conversations. But the Biblical teaching is that the very spirit of truth and holiness waits to become a resident in every man. Your sons and daughters, your old men and your young men, your servants and handmaids may see its visions and dream its dreams.

A second truth embraced in this doctrine is that the Spirit who thus seeks to abide in the heart is truly and properly divine. The great Greek moralist thought of the voice which spoke to him as that of some one of many divinities. And men have been worthily moved to better things when they have felt that the invisible presence of a deceased father, mother or friend was warning or guiding them. But the Spirit promised by our Saviour was none other, none less than that of him in whom we live and have our being. For, concerning him, St. Paul asks, "For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him: even so, the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God." Besides, it is the same Spirit which dwells at the same instant in thousands and millions of persons whose earthly homes are farasunder. One may now inquire, if this is not a large article of faith to lay upon the mind, that the creative Spirit himself will come into intimate union with any lowly child of clay? Yes, it is a great belief, but it is a great comfort as well. Would it have lessened Socrates' satisfaction in his guardian genius if he had ventured to think that the inward monitor was not a divine messenger only, but God himself? When she was but a maiden, Sarah Pierrepont cherished the idea

that the Great Being who made the world came to her in her quiet hours of thoughtfulness and prayer. That idea is vast enough to overwhelm the soul. But it did not overwhelm, it gave her a singular peace and purity. It did not add to her tasks save as wings are an addition to a bird. The weight of the feathers is a trifle as compared to the power given by them to fly the fields of air. It does verily task our credence to entertain the conviction that there may be personal fellowship with the maker of heaven and earth. Behold, the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less the little house which the single soul inhabits ! But the conviction is more rewarding than it is tasking.

The third truth revealed in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit involves the fact that in some way the Spirit, while one with the Father and the Son, is distinguishable from each. So even our text implies. It is the Son, who is speaking: “*I will pray the Father* and the Father shall give you *another comforter*, not him whom you have had the last three years, but another.” So this simple, unlabored verse carries in it the great mystery of the Trinity. Here, then, the Christian revelation is often regarded as making large drafts on the human understanding. For how can we compass

the thought that God is one, and yet he can be spoken of as Father, Son and Holy Ghost at the same moment? Even when what the Scriptures teach is made over into the carefully worded creeds of the Church, those careful words expose difficulties quite as much as they resolve them. And yet our Christian faith continually brings this teaching to our attention. For we open our services with the doxology and close them with the benediction, and we cannot put the Gospel into the simplest statement without suggesting the Trinity.

But the very fact that this doctrine is sung in the Church from age to age, carries with it the assurance that, however deep the mystery of it, there must be lying in its heart a world of comfort. And experience shows that, in the history of human thought, this mysterious truth is the very one by which alone is maintained the living and effective belief in one God, who is holy and loving. No doubt many individuals, who decline to assent to the technical creed of the Trinity, have nevertheless a hearty and fruitful confidence in the Father of us all, but they were trained in the atmosphere of the Scriptures and have been educated and molded by the very truth which they formally deny or fail to accept. And while some,

ever and anon, troubled by the intellectual problem they cannot solve, drop this high article of the faith, yet others who thought to find content in the bare unity of God, have been constrained by their spiritual necessities to revert to the Trinitarian conception. Few men ever strove to hold the unitarian way of thinking more ably or honestly than Dr. Huntington, who now for so many years has been a Bishop in one of the dioceses of the Episcopal Church. But after many years of service as a preacher, he was moved to write the marked discourse, entitled, "Life, Salvation and Comfort for man in the Divine Trinity." Few events were more full of suggestion than the conversations and other public utterances in which that veteran transcendentalist, Mr. Alcott, a few years ago, expressed his conviction that no complete rest for the religious mind was to be found save in the distinct and decided recognition of the revelation of God that is made in the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. These instances alone are enough to show that the very doctrine, which, on its speculative side, may occasion perplexity, may bring a great satisfaction to the reason and the heart. Faraday, the chemist, was a humble and warm disciple of Christ, a man of prayer. It is a significant fact that Prof. Tyndall, not generally regarded as a believer, once

heard him offer a brief prayer, and the Professor described it as the “the petition of a son, into whose heart God had sent the Spirit of his Son and who with absolute trust asked a blessing from his Father.” That is, genuine, evangelical prayer is best described in the very language which involves, and, indeed, expressly utters, the full doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Surely any truth in the light of which, as matter of fact, the sinful soul gets the Spirit of adoption and so is enabled to say, *Abba Father*, as an accepted child, has more comfort than it brings burden.

A fourth truth connected with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the inspiration of the Scriptures. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” “Holy men spake of old as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” And there is good reason to conclude that the immediate reason why the departing Saviour promised the Comforter to his apostles was because they were to bear an oral and written witness to him which would abide in his Church forever. In consequence of this especial work of the Spirit we have the authoritative volume we call the Bible. Now, it is possible to conceive of the inspiration of the Scriptures in such a way as to make it an imposition. Men may say, it increases the number and gravity of various

problems. Men wrest it to their own destruction. They wrangle over it. They prove anything they choose by it. We need not deny this. We may concede and deplore it. Still the facts show that, wherever the Bible is received and obeyed as the work of men moved of God's spirit, it brings many times more comfort than it brings burdens. It follows the analogy of all knowledge. Does not the theory of atoms raise questions? Yes, but the scientist says, it clears up many questions also. Picking out the difficulties raised by the claim of the Scriptures to have been inspired, it has been possible for some men to assert that such a view of the book is an incubus on the intellect. But in the very towns and cities where this assertion is made are thousands of people who have been redeemed, in both their understanding and life, because they have treated the Bible as if it were the very word of God. In the little British province of Natal there was some years ago a learned Bishop who spent much time in showing how many difficulties arise in relation to the narratives given in the Pentateuch, supposing it to be other than a purely human work. No doubt the effect of the Bishop's treatises was to convey the impression that some conceptions of inspiration are a weight. Yet just across the sea

from where he wrote, on the island of Madagascar, in the same time, at least 60,000 then, many more now, came up out of their idolatry and degradation. And it can be shown that it was the Bible, believed to be the word of the Divine Spirit, which caused this wonderful change; because for years every missionary was driven from the island and the germs of the movement were kept alive by the few copies of the Scriptures which the persecuted converts counted more precious than their life. Besides, we are to remember that the inspiration promised by our Saviour had a larger reference than merely to secure or confirm our reverence for the book; it was a guarantee that there should come a power which should open the volume to the mind; so that men should no longer, in reading either the Old or the New Testament, have a veil over their eyes, but that should take place which took place, when Jesus himself explained the prophets to the two disciples, the heart should burn in sight of the illuminated pages. Now, "the Lord is that Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord, there is liberty"; the letter of the Word is no more a bondage, but full of light and comfort.

And this leads naturally to one more point; the promise of Christ in the Holy Spirit is the promise of a direct divine working in the regener-

ation and sanctification of the soul. "That which is born of the spirit is spirit." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance." Looking on one side of this matter as Nicodemus did, it were possible to think of this transformation as something mysterious. How can these things be? Why need we be perplexed about any doctrine of the new birth? Were it not enough to be honest and do about right? Such questions suppose that the Holy Spirit is principally so much more that is to be believed; rather he is so much divine energy made possible in our behalf. It is just conceivable that if a strong friend should throw a rope to a drowning man, the latter might answer, Did I not have all I could think of or do before? Why make me think about this rope and the necessity of making connection with it? But we do not expect any such answer. Rather the coming of the friend and the throwing of the rope seem to be entirely help and no burden at all. Do you hear the great contractors and builders of our time, on the whole, finding fault because science or invention brings to them some new force, or makes some force more available? Very likely, it does involve some new adjustment,

some painstaking, but it brings more help than it does trouble.

Now, at five points we have looked at the doctrine of another advocate, and seen at each of these points, that though, if one choose to take it so, it increases the articles of one's creed, yet it increases vastly more one's help and courage and hope. Our Lord's prayer is answered; in the words of the text we read over again the gracious meaning we have found in it, "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another advocate," not another task master, or creditor, or prosecutor, but another advocate, and such an advocate is a comfort indeed.

When our Saviour was speaking about this great gift to his disciples, the whole matter, it would seem, was more puzzling than it was assuring and restful. They interrupted him again and again with questions. "What," asked Jude, "what has come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world?" "What is this that he saith," said one to another, "What is this that he saith?" "We know not what he saith." So always, when any truth which is new, of whose reality we have little or no experience, is stated to us in words, it either falls dead upon us or it pricks our understanding and sets us

asking why, how and wherefore. And a child may ask more questions than its mother at least can answer. But these days, when the promise of the Father was a truth which lay outside of them, passed away with the disciples, and the days came when what was a doctrine became also an experience. The another advocate was as real as the one whom they had seen with their eyes and their hands had handled. They saw the world—the very men who had taken part in the crucifixion—convicted of sin ; men, perhaps, who had allied Jesus to Beelzebub and said, Thou hast a devil, now convinced of his righteousness. They found themselves remembering matters in the Lord's history and teaching which at the time made small impression : things dark before became light ; the moral weakness which made them timid was transformed into a marvellous boldness ; the low, earthly views they had had of the mission of the Saviour became large and spiritual. Could not questions, many and subtle, be asked still about this Comforter ? Could the mere intellect say any better whence this wind cometh or whither it goeth ? No. The theory of an earthquake often remains puzzling us, though we have had the most sensible evidence of its power. We may be illumined and cheered by

electric light, while many secrets concerning electricity lie unrevealed.

The Christian doctrine of the Holy Spirit has been verified again and again in the experience of millions. No boy or girl in these Christian lands lives without feeling, in greater or less degree, the monitions of his presence in the conscience. Sometimes, the voice seems very clear and very urgent. No one of us who reads the Scriptures, but detects the invisible power and catches the outlines of the invisible form. Often we meet men and women who are evidently molded by this agent. He it is who makes the atmosphere of some localities and societies so much more pure and quickening than others are. And when ever any one says in his heart of hearts, I choose to be led by the Spirit that glorifies Christ, that moment, the doctrine he has heard of by the hearing of the ear, and concerning which he has queried, how can these things be? has become life and immortality.

V.

THIRTY YEARS IN NAZARETH.

“And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and he was subject unto them.—LUKE 2:51.

THE childhood of Jesus occupies but a small portion of the Gospels. In the Gospel of Mark, not a word is said about it. Jesus is of full age when he appears in Mark's story; and—to use this evangelist's favorite adverb—"straightway" the Messiah proceeds to the quickly succeeding tasks of his public ministry. In the copy of the New Testament which I have commonly used, two hundred and eighty-five pages are given to the things which Christ said and did after his baptism, but barely one page to the incidents connected with his previous life. Once only in all this period do we distinctly see the boy, and then, according to the story in Luke, he goes down with his parents to their retired provincial town; and nearly everything that can be said with certainty of his youth is that he was subject to the parental order and discipline.

Of the parents, we are told, they did not understand the answer which their son gave them in explanation of his tarrying in Jerusalem, when they were seeking for him. So we may as well confess that we do not understand all the reasons of the long obscurity of his thirty years at Nazareth. But this is also told us, that his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. If we cannot understand all the problem of the Saviour's childhood, nor all the reasons why so little is related concerning it, we may imitate Mary and ponder the little that is related. What are some of these suggestions that are likely to occur to us, when we consider that the inconspicuous years in the story of the Redeemer so greatly outnumber those which were conspicuous? When we take a look at some one Sabbath, full of the Saviour's labors, it is easy to learn important lessons; but what lessons are to be learned when we think of those Sabbaths, so many of them, in which it would appear probable that he uttered no official teaching and worked no amazing signs?

1. One comprehensive suggestion comes from the consideration of this fact, viz., the reality and significance of our Lord's manhood. It has been sometimes imagined that his manhood was a thing of form, of appearance, something assumed for the

time to make an impression, but not flesh and blood humanity. If we were absolutely confined to the Gospel of Mark, and the Christ were sprung upon us in the fullness of a miraculous activity, without any allusion to antecedent years of infancy and growth, it might be easier to conceive of him in this phenomenal way. But the glimpse that is given us in connection with our text assures us that his thirty years had passed under the common conditions of the average Galilean boy. There had been little, perhaps nothing, of the preternatural in his ways or modes of life. When at last he did preach, speak parable and work surprises of healing, his townsmen could readily ask in their incredulity, Is this not the carpenter's son ? Is not his mother's name Mary ? And his brethren, James, Joses, Simon and Judas ? And his sisters, are they not all with us ? Is he not then just common clay ? We are very apt, now that we have been accustomed to think of him as divine, to argue, Why, there must have been something very extraordinary in the bearing, activity and conduct of Jesus from the beginning. It is really difficult for us to keep him down so long in the actual humanity into which he voluntarily entered. Do we not get a hint that in the holy family at Nazareth those protracted years of simple homely growth and

service were a perplexity and a disappointment ? Else how could it be that the simple suggestion which Mary made about the lack of wine at Cana, should have drawn out so decisive a reminder that his hour was not yet come ? Had it not seemed to her many times before as if his hour would never come ? And his brethren, even after his public ministry, could not believe him ; for if he were the Messiah, how could he live so long down in the common conditions ? If thou doest these things, if thou art the Son of God, how is it possible that thou dost not manifest thyself to the world as such ? Now, the fuller doctrine in the later portions of the New Testament emphasizes the fact that it was necessary for the Redeemer to become human in order to redeem. And when we turn back to the record of the Gospels we mark this long period, when nearly all that appears to us is that he was one of an ordinary household. The apocryphal Gospels were not content with this record. They multiplied the miraculous back into his earlier development. It has taken the painters many centuries to learn to represent him without the halo about his head. And do not even we keep saying to ourselves, how could it have been that he should have failed so long to show his divinity ? But the facts would rather teach us that the

divinity was to be revealed when the hour should be come. Meanwhile, and for a long while, he was to live just a life of full identity with his fellow-men. We must indeed affirm that this ordinary life was morally spotless. Purity, truth, obedience, good will, were in him without flaw. But these qualities do not astonish the average mass of people. They are not so highly esteemed always, even in one's own family. They do not always suit the ambitions of the parents. They may be misconstrued. They may be thought too good and inconvenient to have about. To be sure, we all of us think that if we had a real angel in the house, we should know he was winged, even if the wings themselves were concealed. But it would be no marvel if the angel should at times wish he could exercise his wings and fly away, and be somewhere where his motives and acts would not be so misconceived, and his spirit not so grieved. It is probable that that day when Jesus read the Scriptures in the synagogue, where he had been brought up, was not the first time that he had felt the force of the proverb, "No prophet is acceptable in his own country." However morally superior he was, as compared to his brothers or his townsmen, they might not have eyes to see it. As far as they were concerned, he was of no extraordinary

reputation ; his life was just our common human lot. He was bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

It follows, therefore, as a second suggestion, that the temptations of an ordinary life were met by our Saviour. We know that he met extraordinary temptations, those peculiar to himself as the Redeemer. We read, also, of the special temptation that preceded his public career. That was for forty days in the wilderness and under the pressure of protracted hunger. We read of the trials to which he was subjected to by reason of the slowness of his disciples and the malignity of his enemies in high places. We read of the agony of the garden. These experiences were unique. But we might think, Why, he was girded for these, as Polycarp, or Latimer, and other martyrs girded themselves for the stake. Many a man or woman has made a supreme effort to meet some supreme occasion ; great grace has been given to endure some exceptional conflict. But back of the exceptional and brief experience of his three years' ministry, lay the thirty years of those every-day vexations, rebuffs and grievances which try the virtue and patience of the great majority of us.

It is common for us to neutralize the force of

this thought by saying, either first, Christ had a divine nature. But it is forgotten that it is a part of the Biblical doctrine that our Lord did not allow himself to use his divine prerogatives for the relief of his personal wants, nor for his human virtue. He laid aside the exercise of his divine powers for his own individual comfort and strength. Or second, it is said, well he had no inward craving for the unlawful, no inclination to anything wrong ; it was not hard for him to be good. No doubt, there was this disinclination to wrong choice. But we must not think of the matter as if Christ was so constituted as to go through all the narrowness, irritation and fascination of human experience, and feel no impression from them. He was moved by them. To be sure, they did not move him as they would, if he had allowed himself to come under their control. A child may be fretted, because he loves good rather than evil ; but he will feel it differently and worse, if his heart says, I do not care, I am going to fret. Then the temptation is let in and it has its way. We do not wish to think that our Lord had that irritability which comes in the cherishing of bad thoughts, but he did have those sensibilities by which he could be severely tried, and against the trial he must resist. The point is that for thirty

years he bore those petty and perpetual annoyances which are met at the different stages of the growing years. No diary was to be kept of them. No one would know of his conflict or his victory in detail. His tempted lot was, then, so much like most of ours. For all of us have difficulties that are only such as are common to men. They are too trivial to be made public. They do not give us any martyr's crown. If we should speak about them much, perhaps people would wonder how we have come to be making so much of nothing. They have their roots in a child's sensitiveness ; they are complicated with what is styled a woman's nervousness ; or, we say, they are born only of a man's pride. But they chafe us nevertheless. And the blessed thought is that, in those unrecorded years, Christ was tempted on this common plane and yet without sin.

The third suggestion coming, as we look back into the obscure years at Nazareth, is that the Divine Providence puts a high estimate on periods of preparation. There may be stated many reasons why our Master should have begun his work earlier. It had been so long since Israel had been waiting for the Messiah. False religion was everywhere among the nations. Errors had been, and were now, traversing all the lands. Evil

men and seducers were waxing worse and worse. The poor needed the Gospel. During those thirty years, while he was tarrying at Nazareth, a generation of the human family would go down to their graves without the light which he could give. Why should one, so wonderfully born and endowed, given such a message of peace and good will, be detained in a little town in the foot-hills and be working in the routine of ordinary labor for so long a time? Why not put his mouth to the trumpet at once? The question involves points which are beyond our solution. But our text directs our attention to the fact that preparation was needed in him, as well as in the world into which he came. Salvation was not to come by a sudden leap, a flash across the sky. The three years of a Saviour's work needed ten times three years of preparation. This may not seem accordant with some partial notions some of us may have concerning Christ. Why was he not as well fitted to enter on his work at eighteen as at thirty? The doctors in the temple were "amazed at his understanding and his answers," although he was only twelve years old. Why should eighteen years more pass before the people in general should be "astonished at his doctrine"? There can hardly be a reply to these

questions which does not include high appreciation of those years which custom and reason assign as the season of preparation. In bringing many sons to glory, it behooved that the author of salvation be made perfect, not merely through the suffering of death, but through all the antecedent discipline of his home in Nazareth. What strikes us here, is not the facilities, the specially favorable opportunities which Nazareth afforded—that city could not boast of such—but these two things, the stillness of retirement and the element of time. What is twice recorded of his mother, that she “kept things in her heart, pondering them,” we may be sure was characteristic of Jesus. It takes time, it needs retirement, to keep the great things of God in the heart and to weigh them so as to feel their real value, and be prepared to express them to others. And if Christ needed such preparatory discipline, surely it need not be argued that they who are far less endowed than he, need it.

That which was necessary in our Lord is constantly illustrated in his disciples and his kingdom. Preparatory experience and training constitute so large a portion of life. Sometimes it seems as if it were all. For how often sickness, early death or other disability, arrests or keeps

men and women on the threshold. What a disproportion between the vestibule and the building! If we should look only at our Lord's thirty-three years, as they seemed, say, just after his death, we should feel as those did who walked to Emmaus, "looking sad." For the thought would oppress us that he was only just ready to be useful and now he is cut off! But wait and let the eighteen centuries go by, and we shall see that the short life was so wonderfully preparatory for the dispensation of the divine Comforter. So secular minds, who see missionaries taking long courses of study and spending much time in acquiring a foreign tongue, and then toiling away with little obvious result, are inclined to exclaim against waste, and even are so small-sighted as to calculate the cost of one convert. They do not consider that this is the foundation labor; large indeed if only one convert were to constitute the structure to be erected on it, but not too large, if by and by a nation is to throng the walls and sing praises in its aisles. Along the Bay of Bengal, some sixty years ago, two humble men had prayed and taught for six years and no one embraced the faith they taught; but at the end of the sixth year, two native disciples came in their feebleness. An ordinary traveller, coming along that season might easily

have leaped, like Remus, over the wall of this new Rome. But then commenced a movement, so that now hundreds of Christians stand where once two stood and scores of native preachers spread the truth far and wide. It has been said that the ledge on which Minot's Ledge light-house in Boston harbor is built, was uncovered but twenty minutes a day at low tide, and so two full years were spent by the workmen, before the sea-worn surface was made ready to receive the first layer of stones in the foundation. Two more years of wearisome endeavor were spent before the first few courses were finished. But after that the structure could go rapidly and surely forward. Do not despise the days of preparation, even if they do seem like the day of small things. Something is done then which cannot be done after. The labor that is out of sight may be more important than that which comes to view. The young men who are in a hurry to leave school, or college, or seminary, or who ask what is the use of this or that long-tried method of discipline, are not likely to do the most valuable work of the world. Visible results are darling objects of desire, but they usually may be traced back at last to somebody who was willing to plough and sow for others to reap.

It is probable that fault has been found with the

Gospels because they are so reticent about the earlier life of our Lord. But if we have taken a correct impression, the silence is itself most instructive and comforting. For the great mass of men are not prominent. Their life is obscure. They might become depressed in consequence. Can it be that, when the Lord himself was on the earth, his lot lay, and that most of the time, in just such conditions? And did he also feel the depression incident to such lowly conditions? Then he is not the Saviour only of the men and women who have felt their lives sublime, but of us who have not felt our lives sublime at all. He must have some quick feeling with ministers whose congregations are not large and whose work makes small noise in the world; with parents who have to wait long for wisdom and grace to blossom in their children; with those children who patiently continue their studies and discipline, though they do hear the Syren call outside; with chronic invalids who wonder what the tedious months of seclusion can mean; with those who plant institutions that do not at once become Oxfords or Yales. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says: "Verily, not of angels doth he take hold, but he taketh hold on the seed of Abraham." We may add, verily, he took not hold of the social conditions repre-



sented by the rich, learned, the people of genius and the successful ; but he took the conditions of the commonplace. He tasted death for every man, but he tasted the slow, baffled, lingering and monotonous life, which must in some degree and at some time puzzle us all.

Let us, then, close with the suggestion that God esteems it a great thing to be just obedient and submitted within the lot assigned us in family, school, neighborhood. For Christ went down from the great and holy city, from the rooms of the reverend doctors in the gorgeous temple, and came to Nazareth, and he was subject for thirty years to his parents. He learned that plain grace of obedience in the things he had to meet there. The sphere was not wide, but the words which he once used of Mary, of Bethany, might be applied to him, *He hath done what he could.* We are often restless. We would prefer some other sphere. The treadmill fills not our capacity. Even home may seem narrow. It cannot be that Jesus found all his nature satisfied in his adopted town. He outgrew it. When his hour came, he left it. So, when the hour comes, let us gladly enter larger spaces that may open to us. But until then God give us the grace that can be faithful in the few things. It may happen, indeed, certainly it does

happen, that they who have held large trusts, may, by some reverse or disability, come to find their opportunity contract. The rich man becomes poor ; the President returns to the place of one of sixty millions of people. The old man's honors he sees slip from him into younger men's hands. Peter who girded himself, and walked whither he would, comes to be girded by another and carried whether he would not. How changeful life is ! How great a grace that, learned from Christ, which enables us to make the best of, and do the best in, whatever condition Providence may assign us.



VI.

NOT TO JUDGE, BUT TO SAVE.

"For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him."—JOHN 3:17.

ON the day of Victor Hugo's funeral in Paris, workmen were noticed removing the cross from the public building which was to be prominent in the eye of the people on that day. That removal of the cross was a sign that somehow large numbers of the Parisian populace look upon Christ, at least as represented by the Church there, as their enemy rather than as their friend. The French radicals are not the only ones who have come to misconceive of the main mission of Christ. There is an old story, which used to be told in the juvenile papers, with a telling picture to match it. The picture shows a boy gasping in deep water. He is evidently in danger of drowning. On the bank near by, a tall, straight, dignified old gentleman is standing, who swings his cane energetically to and fro. He is taking the boy to task for his carelessness. Meanwhile,

however, the strength of the child is failing fast, and he cries out, "O, sir, save me first and lecture me afterwards!" Would it not be a gross mistake if men should come to think of Christ thus? If they should make judgment instead of salvation the chief errand for which God sent his Son into our world?

It is worth our while to note, then, the pains which our Master took to emphasize the principal business on which he came. Thus, even when he had occasion to speak with severity to his cavilling countrymen, he said, "Think not that I will accuse you to the Father." When the Pharisees reproached him, he told them, "I judge no man." When some Samaritan villagers did not show a decent hospitality, and James and John would have him command fire to come down and consume them, he rebuked the two disciples. The air of religious Palestine was full of religious teaching which despised publicans and sinners, but it was his joy to relate the parables of the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the prodigal son. On the very last week of his life, when, notwithstanding all his miracles, his countrymen did not believe him, he does not hesitate to hold forth the same truth that is stated in our text, "And if any man hear my sayings and keep them not, I

judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."

This prominence of the saving errand stands out in the name, which was to be given him at his birth, "And thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." This was the good tidings which the angel brought to the shepherds, "For there is born to you this day in the City of David, a Saviour."

His miracles manifest this same great purpose. Of the thirty-three mighty works, distinctly narrated, none of them bring judgment upon men. The only approach to a miracle of harm appears when the swine were left to run down a steep place into the sea, and when the barren fig-tree was made to wither away. Even these two strokes of power were rather for instruction than for judgment. But the great body of wonderful works were for the relief of human suffering and need. They were deliverances, not inflictions. It should be remembered that in connection with these very acts of mercy, Jesus met with stinging provocation. He was accused of doing these acts by league with the devil. He was blamed for doing them. Easily he might have meted to his critics condign punishment, struck them

with blindness or leprosy, as did Elisha ; visited them with death, as Peter did Ananias and Sapphira. But endowed with amazing power, he did not use it thus. He went about to heal, not to harm.

His death signally disclosed his character of a Saviour. It might have been expected that in the final scene there would be some token that the King of the Jews was their judge. There was darkness. The earth did quake. The rocks were rent. The temple's vail was torn in twain. Earth, as was fit, gave sign that she felt the wound her Lord was receiving. But we do not read that a single creature in the vast and stormy throng was hurt. Creatures were there, who, only a few hours before, had spit upon him. But they were safe. The soldiers cast lots for his garments beneath the cross on which he hung, but no bolt fell from the darkening sky. People continually were passing by, wagging their heads in ridicule and insult, but no vengeance befel them. The chief priests, scribes and elders stood now in sight of their victim, mocking, chuckling over their victory, deriding his high claims. Is there no indignation gathering hot in that suffering Son of God, which shall presently devour such adversaries ? Elijah's wrath on Carmel slew the priests of Baal

with instant fury. But their provocation was far less than the provocation given by those who cried, Crucify him, and who taunted the blameless Messiah. But there was no wrath in the Saviour on that day. Words of apology were offered in behalf of the immediate actors in the scene. "They know not what they do." Words of forgiving intercession arose in the midst of that angry air. "Father, forgive them." A thief, who was meeting the just judgment for his deeds, received the promise of Paradise that same hour. The wonderful being who was stretched on that rude wood, as he came, lived, wrought his miracles, so now he dies, not to judge, but to save the world.

If this office of Saviour thus stood out subordinating his mission as judge, then we who represent Christ need to take pains to represent him to the world in that light. We need to take special pains.

One reason for this is that it was a subordinate end and, incidentally, a necessary result of Christ's visit to earth that the world would be judged. He came as the light comes. It is not the chief function of the sunshine to reveal the objects which are unsightly and repulsive, yet the sun cannot shine where such objects are, without exposing them to view. So our Saviour says in one place,

“Now is the judgment of the world.” That and similar passages might seem to contradict the assertion in our text. But there is no real contradiction. It is well known that wherever Christ is preached, there the fact of human sinfulness and peril becomes clearer and often more oppressive. So, the very word, preach, has come to take on a secondary instead of its primary meaning. Its real evangelistic meaning is to tell the good news. But if in the course of conversation one of us should reprove a fault, or suggest a duty, or warn against some moral danger, he would very likely be answered, Oh, don’t preach. So the sermon, in many minds, comes to be chiefly the handling of men’s sins and the exposure of the sinner’s danger. But that is not its distinctive character. Sin is hardly more the chief burden of a preacher than sickness is the great mission of the physician. It may be necessary for a doctor to show his patient that he is really a sick man ; it may be important that he should tell him what and how serious a matter his disease is. For the patient may be deceived. But, comparatively, it is an inferior function of a physician to magnify disease. His principal errand is to bring some remedy, to effect a cure. What is called the diagnosis, the thorough and accurate knowledge of the case, is, indeed, of

very vital importance. We all know what vain attempts are often made to cure, simply because the sick man is treated for the wrong disease. It is not wonderful, therefore, that some persons should magnify this power of accurate vision and should say, Why, that man told me just how I felt, and looked right through me. It is not the most pleasant thing in the world for people to know morally just how they are. It may be said to be the most painful thing in the world. The attempts on the part of the health authorities in some of the cholera-stricken cities of Spain, to put those cities in a good sanitary condition, were resisted ; led almost to riot. The health-officer will see too much filth, and the people will see it, too. Is not, then, the cleansing of a foul city a great good ? Should not the sight of men who come to bring purity, to sweeten the air and ensure immunity from plague, be welcome ? It was not. Do you say, how absurd and suicidal was this feeling of the Spaniards ? But it is the feeling that reigns in human hearts about the Saviour from sin. He suggests to them, not so much salvation, as the bad moral condition. A young lady who had a morbid feeling concerning death, declared she never liked to see a minister, because he suggested to her mind a funeral. Now, a true Gospel minis-

ter should suggest to a young lady immortality rather than death. But one opposite implies another. And the soul that is sensitive about its wrong-doing, may be more sensitive of it when the Saviour appears, than before. A young man was once lying in a dejected and miserable state in London. He had been living a bad life. As he lay there, these words came suddenly to memory : "Call upon me, and I will deliver thee." These words are sweet words of promise, but the moment he recalled them, they were not comforting, but condemning. His past life rose up before him. It is a bad perversion that thus changes the Saviour into the judge, but, I think, we see how the perversion is liable to occur, and so, why we need to take pains to overcome it.

Again, it may be that in our worthy desire to set forth the worth and majesty of Christ we shall lose the sense of what his chief errand is. It is possible to dwell so much on the Lord's divinity, or on his transcendent moral perfectness, that the imperfect heart will feel as if it had no part with him. It may happen to us as to Peter after the marvellous draught of fishes. The master was so lifted up in his divine power that the disciple was constrained to cry out, Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord. A notable perversion

arises thus in the Roman Church. Why do you not go right to Christ, we may ask the suppliant at those altars. Ah, he is too holy, too lofty, too separate from sinners. So, the soul feels its way to the Virgin. But, by and by, hearing the perpetual strain of adoration to the immaculate Mary, the devotee may feel that even the Virgin is too exalted for common access. So in some quarters they call upon Joseph, or you may hear one pleading with Anna. But who is Anna? Was she not the reputed mother of Mary? Or, remaining Protestant, we may dwell upon the spotlessness of the Son of Man, and think of him more as the holy one than as the Saviour.

Now, it matters not how high and glorious we make Christ to be, provided we conceive of his high attributes as all qualifying him to do, and as all devoted to the doing of, his saving work. If a child were wont from earliest years to conceive of his father as a wise, righteous, and superior person, occupied with high thoughts and having to do with vast affairs, it would be no wonder if the filial feeling should become overawed. If he wants anything, he has to get his mother, or elder brother, or sister to go in, as Esther did to Ahasuerus, and ask the great King. He does not think of speaking about it himself. But let the

little fellow know from the first that the best thing in his father is his fatherliness ; then you may make his father king or emperor and ascribe to him all grand qualities, and the filial feeling remains. The more of these regal glories, the greater and more wonderful a father he has ; that is all. So, provided we keep the idea of Saviour foremost, we cannot think too highly of Christ. He may be to us a great High Priest, passed through the heavens ; on his head be many crowns ; but we shall behold his name, Saviour, written on all his robes ; we shall see him, as John saw him in the Revelation, a lamb in the midst of the throne. The more glorious he is, the more glorious our Saviour is ; that is all.

The testimony of the negro, who, when he compared his new minister with Dr. Bellamy, said of the latter, "He make God so great, so great," has often been quoted. That indeed is a very important impression to make. It is important to make it just now. For there is a very strong tendency and, with some, a determined movement, to displace the conception of God as the lofty and holy sovereign. No one who reads rightly the Bible, or contemplates the vastness and solemnity of the universe, can sympathize at all with such tendency or movement. All reverent

thought is hushed and humbled in the presence of the Holy Father. Nevertheless, we fail to apprehend the Gospel truly, if we do not emphasize the fact that the greatest truth concerning God is that he has become a Saviour. It was said once by a dying daughter to her father, "I remember so far back how good, kind and tender you have been to me ; but most of all, yes, most of all, I thank you that you have held up Jesus before me so early, so constantly, so long. For he is all I have now and all I want here." The greatness and holiness of him with whom we have to do is a necessary truth. The awakened thought cannot escape it. But let it not obscure the central truth of Christian Revelation, that the Great God is a Saviour.

"His sacred name a common word
On earth he loves to hear ;
There is no majesty in him
Which love may not come near ;
Let us be simple with him, then,
Not backward, stiff or cold,
As though our Bethlehem could be
What Sinai was of old."

In this view of our Lord's principal errand, we may see in intense light the force of the frequent cautions given by Christ against censoriousness, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." Our Master

would have us like himself, Saviours rather than critics. It is really a very ordinary gift to see motes in other people's eyes, to see and condemn the faults of others. It is cheap; anybody can do it. It is the gift of a common scold. Disciples can easily remark the failings of each other. The man outside the church can censure the church. The children in any family need not be very bright to be able to note the inconsistency of father and mother. It does not require a parent to be remarkable to find fault with his children. But it requires a wise parent to help his child to overcome his fault. A thousand editors can report the crimes that disfigure society. But those editors are few that have sweetness and light enough to promote public reformation. To judge is so much easier than it is to save. Condemnation and rebuke are part of the Christian's duty. He cannot save without bearing his testimony against evil. But what a rare grace it is which enables one to make it evident that the great motive he had in his criticism was to help. I do not know of any habit which is so unbecoming as well as so pitiable in a Christian as the habit of censorious remark. Yet unless we are on our guard, we shall slip into the habit and only our friends, who sadly overhear us, will be aware

how much ill-natured judgment has entered into our spirit and conversation.

This subject offers suggestion, also, to those who suffer from chronic self-condemnation. Some who judge their fellow-men severely, do not spare themselves. Others who are charitable toward their fellows are severe against their own case. Now, it is plain that no faithful conscience can keep accusing the sinner's own self. And a very close scrutiny of one's self by the Christian standard, must bring discomfort. It ought to bring discomfort. But we ought also to be able to see clearly that, under the Gospel, self-accusation is not the main thing we have to do. If it be an element in Christian character, it is not the most Christian element. Yet there are cases in which disciples use the most comforting things that the Lord has said, chiefly to magnify their own unworthiness. It is as if the prodigal, on returning to his father's house, should turn all that his father is doing for him into fuel to feed the fires of remorse. The welcome kiss only reminds him of his alienation. The best robe, how can he, the ungreatful child, wear it? The ring on his finger, how it seems to taunt him with the jewelry he has wasted. And what satisfaction can even the hungry man have in a fatted calf—for has he not wasted his life in

riotous living? As censoriousness may become morbid and chronic, so self-criticism may become equally so. Both miss the marvellous and blessed lesson of our text—God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him. We are to receive him, not most in his subordinate, but in his principal errand. If judgment were what he specially came for, then the most Christian thing would be to stretch ourselves daily on the rack and say over many times a day that we are miserable offenders. But if salvation were the end in which he most delighted, then the highest thing we have to do is to accept, without any reserve and with the fullest gratitude, the unspeakable gift.

This theme points out, too, what is the distinctive and enduring element in the Christian religion. It is extremely difficult for one who is of sharp moral insight to keep back the impulse to judge and condemn. Was it not the remarkable and blessed thing for one who saw with the glance, as of lightning, the sinfulness of the human heart and who at times had occasion to feel all its unspeakable meanness—to lock up, as it were, his judicial faculty in his bosom and live here with the principal purpose to save?

To quench within him even the righteous rebuke and utter instead the words, mainly, of cheer and sympathy and hope ?

It has been sometimes objected to the special claims made for our Christian faith, that Christ added little or nothing to what men knew before of duty. It is possible, men say, to cull from the writings and proverbs of other nations the substance of the Master's moral teaching. Such statements are, of course, made with insufficient discrimination. But even were they truer and more discriminating than they are, they have not touched the peculiar and commanding errand of Jesus. Others may have complained more bitterly than he of what men are. Others may have told what men ought to be. But the Master of the Christian Church came not primarily as a censor, or critic, or teacher of human duty. He was that, of course,—but he was more, he was a Saviour. When the eccentric John Randolph visited England in 1822, he visited the prison, where Elizabeth Fry had begun her wonderful work of reform. In a letter to a friend, he expressed himself thus: "Two days ago I saw the greatest curiosity in London, aye, in England, too, sir, compared with which Westminster Abbey, the Tower, Somerset House, British Museum, nay, Parliament

itself, sink into insignificance. I have seen, sir, Elizabeth Fry in Newgate, and I have witnessed the miraculous effects of true Christianity upon the most depraved of human beings." John Randolph was impulsive and extravagant. But he was not extravagant in singling out this power of Christ over the sinful heart as the greatest curiosity of all. For there is one thing which our Christian faith has been doing and is doing in a way and in a fullness that nothing else can do, it saves. . The world has had great critics, scholars, philosophers, moralists, scientists, orators, poets, artists—and they have contributed to human joy and welfare, but it has had in it only one person to whom has been reserved by wide consent the name of the Saviour. Other names he also bears, but none of them come home so closely to us all as this one. We need teaching and warning and reproof and criticism, but what are all these if we are not saved? We are to quit this life, and then our life broadens and deepens into the everlasting years. In our conscious weakness and sin, the most precious thought that ever enters the mind is that he who will judge us there came first to be our Saviour.

VII.

GIRDLED AND WATCHING.

"Let your loins be girded about and your lamps burning: and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord, when he shall return from the marriage feast; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may straightway open unto him. Blessed are those servants whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching."—LUKE 12:35, 36.

THE picture presented to us here is a night scene. The night is far spent. It is past the usual time of burning lamps. At so late an hour men are not wont to have their loins girded. But in the house pictured to us, the lamps are still burning and the servants are girded for service. There is reason for this special watchfulness, for the master of the house is absent and is expected any moment to return. Were it not for this fact, the servants would be asleep and the house would be undistinguished in the common darkness of the night. Various similar illustrations in the New Testament urge upon the Christian disciple watchfulness, a peculiarly tense, earnest, serious type of character. This is urged so often and so strongly

as to suggest that there must be some grave facts requiring this style of living. The absence and expected return of the master demanded of the servants in the picture an unusual wakefulness ; what are the facts connected with the Christian's probation, which give to his piety, while he is in this world, a special tinge of seriousness ?

1. One fact which, it should seem, is fitted to give this quality to human piety, is our native sinwardness. All the members of the human family wake to consciousness under a stronger tendency to sin than to holiness.

If as we passed through our infant years, it were true that

"Heaven's rich instincts in us grew
As effortless as woodland nooks
Send violets up and paint them blue,"

if it were

"As easy now for the heart to be true
As for grass to be green or skies to be blue,"

there would be far less occasion for the exhortation to watchfulness. The obedience of such a child would be as natural as his sports. It would suggest, not the constraint, but only the beauty of holiness. But the matter is not so with us now. We awake in self-knowledge and find that we

rather not do what is just right ; often, indeed, we want to do that which we know is wrong. We must then run up a steep and narrow path, if we would be thoroughly virtuous. The will must labor to conform to conscience. Have we not, parents and teachers, looked on with a strange pity, as we saw how hard it has been for our children to be good ? The very phrase, to be good, seems sometimes to exasperate the little child.

Now, the shadow of this native sinwardness is thrown along the whole of our earthly path. However early anyone may begin to form a Christian purpose, he begins under that shadow. It follows him, often, far into a mature Christian life. Adult disciples have cried out, as St. Paul did, who shall deliver me from this body of death ? In most cases, at least, Christian piety, even though it be the product of a new birth, lacks the gleeful spontaneousness of a nature originally pure. Its bearing resembles more or less the wary vigilance of servants who wait in the night for their Lord.

2. Another fact in human experience is that, very commonly, before men really enter upon the Christian purpose, their native tendencies have already taken the hardness of cherished habits in transgression. The Master long ago said, Suffer

the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, but despite all that we teach, great numbers, even in Christian families, live many years without coming to him. Meanwhile they fall under the power of sinful habits. These habits are strong. They are not overcome by mere singing. Many a man has wept to find the power of even one such habit over him. Whoever takes up in earnest the resolve to put on the new man knows that it is like the sundering of soul and body to put off the old man with his deeds. He smiles about it, perhaps, who has never set himself against an easily besetting sin. They laugh not, who have resisted unto blood against such sin. The Christian life is real, it is earnest, in such souls.

Besides, we, all of us, naturally expect to see in one who has been overtaken in a fault and who professes penitence on account of it, a carefulness as respects that fault which we would not expect from one who had never been involved in that fault. Should not a burnt child dread the fire? Should not a man who has been degraded by strong drink be peculiarly intense in his opposition to it and specially watchful regarding it? Ought not John B. Gough to have a certain quality as a temperance advocate, which he would not have if he had never himself been overcome? Is it not

seemly for one who has been untruthful to show his changed character by a marked conscientiousness and painstaking in reference to that defect? Cranmer was tempted, while in prison, to recant with his hand the beliefs he cherished in his heart. It was a fitting impulse with him, therefore, when afterward he was brought to the stake, to hold that right hand in the flame. Must not we, all of us who have come under the power of sin, have a different air and mien from what we might properly have had, if we had always obeyed the voice of God within us?

3. A third fact connects itself intimately with the one now mentioned and tends in the same direction; that is, the consciousness of guilt. When any one of us proposes to enter upon a new life, he remembers that the past sinfulness is on record against him. It is on an ineffaceable record. Memory can no more die than himself. History can never be obliterated from the divine knowledge. Might it not be, on the contrary, that some heightened sense of the evil of sin, some more vivid realization of its bitter consequences, even the surer revelation of God's love, should make the memory of our wrong-doing a worse pain than it ever has been? Such questions have, in some sensitive hearts, permanently saddened and

darkened the Christian hope itself. The years when we were boys and girls, are our years now. They are just as much a part of us as any thought or feeling that we are cherishing now. How could Paul ever forget that he was the Saul who kept the garments of them that stoned Stephen ? The new name did not change the fact. The new creature did not. He felt unworthy on account of it till his latest days.

We must conceive of Gabriel as being humble, but do we not think of a peculiar humility as belonging to those who have been forgiven, not seven times, but seventy times seven ? As they stand waiting for their Lord, their recollections of themselves affect sensibly their bearing. Their preparation for him is more scrupulous. For it springs out of hearts, which, having been forgiven much, love him much, and not only much, but with a certain lowliness, delicacy and tenderness, that stand related only to the experience of ill-desert. Do you not see in them a noticeable desire to be so well girded, and to have so perfect lights, all so brightly burning for him ? Intense as is the seraph's zeal, complete as is his prostration before the Holy One, there must be an element of zeal and of humility both in the attitude of one who waits for the master with the recol-

lection of guilt forgiven, which the seraph cannot experience.

4. Still another feature in human probation which must affect the type of piety in this world is the presence and activity of temptation. It is difficult to conceive of any region where moral beings exist that can be wholly void of temptation. Even in what is called heaven there were angels that kept not their first estate. But we must suppose that this earth is eminent as a scene of temptation. Here evil fearfully assaults and cunningly allures. It is made a business. The air we breathe is alive with it. The newspapers tell us, day after day, the story of men and women of high social and even religious repute, who have succumbed to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life. The lesson is forced upon us that, if any of us would be sure to stand, we must take heed lest we fall. Piety, in such a world, must be vigilant in a marked degree. Our religion must dress, not in the white garments of peace and of heaven, but in coats of mail. It should be sweet and amiable, yet it fails and comes to shame, unless it be strictly, I had almost said, severely, conscientious.

5. But this peculiar seriousness which appro-

priately tinges piety here, is deepened by this additional fact, the needy moral condition of our fellow men. If, on coming to himself, the prodigal found that he was the only son to be returned to filial obedience, life would wear a far less serious aspect. If one of these waiting servants found that all his fellow-servants were wakeful, the night of watching were less anxious. But if his fellow-servants are numerously ungirded, if they are even eating and drinking in selfish unconcern or wild disorder, then the night is more dark, and the care and watching of the one or the few must be more urgent. But every intelligent Christian man looks out upon millions of his fellow-men, who are unready to meet their Lord at his coming. They are ignorant, prejudiced, degraded, indifferent, proud, vicious. Physical pain and acute mental suffering meet his eyes at every turn. Such a sight colors with sympathetic sadness and loving earnestness Christian character.

For just imagine how it would take the intensity out of the Church, if it were to become void of the philanthropic or missionary spirit. How it would have ungirded the loins of such men as Martyn, Judson, Stoddard. Martyn might then have taken his learned leisure under the shadow

of an English University. Stoddard might have indulged at will his natural taste for scientific studies. Admit for a moment this thought: If there were no sin, or no considerable amount of it, and how piety might put on its holiday attire. Doubtless, discipleship, on this supposition, might be genuine, worthy, beautiful, useful, but it would be a very different thing from what it needs to be now and here. It must lack that tinge of loving sorrow and self-denial, of which the cross is the sign. Here piety is placed where it must weep with those that weep as often as it rejoices with the joyous. It is in the midst of conflict. It must be subject to the alternations of fear and hope. The moral dangers of the millions must weigh on its feeling. The interests of the Lord's Kingdom must profoundly affect the servant's sense of responsibility during the Lord's absence. The care of such a house as Christ's Church, in the night of his long tarrying, in the midst of a hostile and imperiled world, must require a different service from that which will be needed, when the night is fully spent and the Master has himself returned and all the foes of righteousness are put beneath his feet.

6. The peculiar watchfulness which is warranted by the above facts of human life is made

the more urgent by another weighty consideration: the time in which our piety has its work is short. The coming for which the servant looks seals up the issues of probation. As far as the individual is concerned, the present fleeting period gives all the opportunity that is revealed for a redeemed character. Vast destinies are hanging in the balance. There seems to be, therefore, in this hurrying interval, a massing of forces, a quick battle, and the issue is settled. With such results pending on the way we spend the brief night of our Lord's return, how different, as respects vigilance, earnestness, must piety be with us from what it would be in a world where was no sin and in which no question of redemption was pressed immediately on man's personal decision. As it is here, piety must be grave; it cannot be light and jocular; it cannot be at ease; it must work and watch, the loins girded, the lamps burning, instant in season and out of season.

7. Still another consideration should be mentioned: The hour when these decisions will have passed is an uncertain hour. The time is short, but it is unknown. This makes it needful to be always ready. The expected Lord may arrive at any moment. Who that has read that poem,

entitled, "Coming," which represents one waiting, in sensitive expectancy of the Master's advent, has not felt the plaintive sweetness which such expectancy has wrought into the piety which could thus express itself ?

"So I am watching quietly
Every day ;
Whenever the sun shines brightly,
I rise and say :
Surely it is the shining of his face !
And look unto the gates of his high place
Beyond the sea ;
For I know he is coming shortly,
To summon me.
And when a shadow falls across the window
Of my room,
Where I am working my appointed task,
I lift my head to watch the door and ask
If he is come ;
And the Angel answers sweetly
In my home :
Only a few more shadows
And he will come."

The Christian character into which such a view has thoroughly entered and been inwrought, must be other than it will be when the period of waiting shall be over.

If we gather now these sever facts (1) tha

we awake to consciousness here with sinward tendencies; (2) that we awake to a new moral purpose, usually, after we have long cherished habits of transgression; (3) that a sense of guilt lies ever just beneath the surface of our thoughts; (4) that this earth is for us and for our fellow-men a scene of temptation; (5) that we are to have our work in the midst of a world whose moral necessities are very great; (6) that the issues pending on that work are compressed, within a short limit; and (7) that the hour which cuts these limits short is uncertain: if we gather these facts into one statement, embracing so much more than these brief headings can indicate, we shall not easily escape the one thought before us, that holy character in this world must wear a serious aspect. But there is another fact, greater than all these, which, while it justifies and confirms the reasoning I have followed, adds its own transcendent force to the conclusions which that reasoning reaches.

8. For that person, who of all perceived in their fullest meaning, only without sin, these facts of human probation, assumed in consequence of them just that change in the type of his own holiness which we have found the facts to require of ourselves.

The Saviour is represented to us as once living in the glory he had with the Father before the world began. How different the tone of his life there from what it became, when he humbled himself to assume that acquaintance with grief and sacrifice, which began in his lowly birth and reached its utmost intensity in the passion of the cross. But for these moral conditions of mankind, his holiness would never have been known as the mind which was in Christ Jesus. Theologians do speculate that our Saviour would have taken our human form, even if there had been no sin. But even such theologians do not doubt that the form of his incarnation would have been quite different from that of the crucified Jesus. But, as it was, he whose righteousness was perfect blessedness, became a man of sorrows. He whose home is in the city of God, where are no tears, beheld the cities of earth and wept over them. Surely it is fitting that the servants should be as the Master. If his piety took on a tinge of seriousness by contact with this earth, it need not be strange that our piety, which is not sinless like his, should have this aspect of seriousness also.

Indeed, in view of this presentation of facts, it may be said now, and with emphasis, that the Christian reason abhors a professedly Christian

character which is not pervaded by an earnest purpose. A life that is predominantly frivolous, gossipy, ready to sacrifice everything to a laugh, impatient for amusement, or, being not quick enough to be really mirthful, is used up in trifles, conventionalities, small talk, small music, small literature, is the abomination of the Christian understanding. These lighter things of our existence are not to be condemned. There is a time and a place for them. They have their helpful functions. But the life that is absorbed in these is incapable of defence. It is like the singing of merry airs to a heavy heart, in the midst of a severe calamity, in the room where your best friend lies dead. The new creation groaneth and travaileth to be rid of men and women, whose prevailing conception of living is to have a good time. They are not girded for any service of the Master. They have no lamps burning to welcome his return.

For, it should be said, also, that the principle which underlies this discourse is of wide application. That principle is that our duty, and so the type of our religion, must be shaped not a little by the actual world in which we have our lot. Even our Lord's individuality was influenced by the condition of the humanity which he came to redeem.

So we are not to say absolutely, such is my nature, temperament, taste, affinity. ~ Or such is my ideal of what a Christian should be. The question is, what should you be, what should you do, the world in which you live being what it actually is? If we were at liberty to carve out our career to suit our individual ideals, many of us might choose quite different courses. But we are not at such liberty. We are sinners in a sinful world. We must often deny our preferences. We may be called upon to watch, though it be our nature to sleep. It may be more suitable for us to be sober, even if it be our temperament to be gay. Not what kind of piety would I have to suit myself, but "seeing these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of person ought I to be in all holy living and godliness."

But let no one suppose that this serious, vigilant piety is therefore devoid of true joy. No doubt it may appear to be. There may be a good deal of what is called fun in forgetting the stern facts of our own and the world's need and in gratifying our own appetites and desires and tastes. The servants who run their risks and eat and drink and are drunken, may have some pleasures which those who keep their lamps burning do not enjoy. But it is just as true that these watchful

servants have a joy to which the others must be strangers. The serious man has his blessedness as certainly as the frivolous man has his pleasure. It has been queried whether Christ ever laughed. We do not read of it. It has been asked whether there are any signs of humor in his words. They are few. But it would be a great mistake to suppose that therefore he was gloomy. "These things," said he to his disciples on the dark night of his betrayal, "have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be fulfilled." There was joy enough in that great heart to thrill millions of souls. I think, as a matter of fact, earnest-minded disciples have quite as much wit, humor and minor pleasures as the average of people. But one thing I know, and it is much the more pertinent and important consideration, that the man of earnest Christian purpose has a blessedness which only he can have. For, says our text, blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching. For the approving smile of the returning Master is felt in their hearts long before his form can be discovered in the diminishing distance.

VIII.

BLESSING IN PASSING.

"Passing through the valley of weeping make it a place of springs."—PSALM 84: 6.

THESE words refer to companies of pilgrims journeying to the place of national worship in Jerusalem. These companies passed over mountains, along steep cañons, through valleys. Some of these valleys might be lovely; others hot, parched, sterile, like that wilderness into which poor Hagar went, and where she cast her son under the bushes and sat over against him and lifted up her voice and wept. So many a valley through which pilgrims took their way might be a valley of weeping. The point in our text is that the godly man on his heavenly journey will make the very places of his sojourn, however uncomfortable, sources of blessing. He will leave a well behind him.

Let us illustrate our text by a reference to a familiar scene in the life of the Saviour. Several times during his brief public career, he went up

to Jerusalem. On one of these return journeys, he must needs pass through Samaria. In that narrow and hot valley near to Sychar he sat down wearied by the well of Jacob. It was only a way station in a hostile country. The sun was at its meridian, for it was about the sixth hour. All that the disciples who were with him thought of just now was to get some food. As for striking any new springs for others, it does not seem to have entered their minds. But the Master found meat to eat they knew not of. He gave to the woman who chanced to meet him there, and to many people of the adjacent town, a well springing up unto eternal life. So far as we partake of the Master's spirit, we shall leave whatever places we pass on this earthly journey richer for our passing.

For it may be shown, first, that the great and immortal hope of the Christian pilgrim makes the life he lives here have its highest meaning and worth. We meet with thousands of experiences which are endurable to us only on the expectation that by and by we shall have gone past them to something which is better. It is astonishing what men will bear and even find a certain delight in, when they are looking forward to some object beyond. A camp-life which has not a few dis-

comforts, may be made to seem quite enjoyable to those who are going to Yosemite or Mount Shasta. The miserable days of voyage at sea have been braved, even by some delicate invalid, that she might visit Paris or look at the Swiss glaciers. The hazards and annoyances of Africa's exploration are frightful, but men press on at risk of fever and poisoned arrows that they may open the dark continent. Stanley noted how depressed, sullen, lifeless or desperate some of his Zanzibar companions became, after they had gone hundreds of miles into the unknown regions. Days and weeks had gone by and still the great river flowed on, as if it never could end. The same or worse difficulties stared them in the face. Those poor nations had no clear conception of the goal which their leader expected to reach: it was difficult, therefore, to keep up the spirits of these men. The vast tract of country through which they toiled lost its charm, because of the oppressive feeling that they were never to come out of this into anything which would be to them home. Even when they had reached the coast, it was impossible to stimulate some of them, as they lay listless, benumbed, dying. "Do you wish to see Zanzibar, boys?" "Ah, it is far, nay, speak not, master, we shall never see it." It makes a great

difference with the life of any of us whether we are sustained by an unfaltering hope. It is no wonder that we have so many suicides. For so many people in our day have lost the strength and cheer which come from the clear and definite expectation of the heavenly world. They are disenchanted ; their illusions, they profess to think, are passed away. But such disenchantment beggars human existence. How can the soul be content to be just a tramp, who has no continuing city here and who seeks no particular one to come.

That was quaint humor, though just a little sly, in Dr. William Goodell, of Constantinople, when near the close of his long life, he visited Chicago, and being asked to say a few words there, made this genial speech : " When I went from my native country, it was to go to Jerusalem ; that was my destination ; there I expected to live, to labor and to die and be buried, arising again at the resurrection of the just. I have never been there. I have now set my face toward the new Jerusalem, taking Chicago by the way." That was putting Chicago in a new light. But surely it makes another and more blessed thing of many a city and stopping place of earth, if we put it in connection with heaven. The moment

we look at any place of our sojourn or any fortune of our life as linked with our passage to glory, that place and fortune are transformed. The alkali station has become a garden with fountains of water.

Again, the Christian pilgrim makes the vale of weeping a well, because he regards his passage through it as included in the divine will. There have been those who have disliked the doctrine of the divine purpose in every event. That must have been owing to one of two causes. Either they were conscious of antagonism to God, to him who made the purpose, or they were laboring under some misconception as to the nature of his purposes. Some years ago, when one of our prominent citizens returned from some months' stay in Nevada, at the time of its early settlement, he spoke of it as a God-forsaken land. That is a favorite designation given to not a few sections of our earth. But the designation is, and is meant to be, the worst possible. For if any place were really deserted of God, what could a pious man do there? He could neither praise nor pray. Well might Madame Guyon sing,

"If I were cast where thou art not,
That were indeed a dreadful lot."

It is a hideous thought. To a believer in God

it is unthinkable. That is indeed the joy of the religious mind that it is able to discern in all events, without any exception, the agency of the one holy and perfect will. Every valley, even if it be named Weeping, is down on the Heavenly Father's chart. It is related of Richard Weaver, that once riding with a farmer through a fair and rich district of England, he kept speaking of the successive farms as all belonging to his Father. This very much irritated the farmer, until it was explained that Mr. Weaver had become a son of the Being who made and governs all the world. The moment that conviction is an assurance, the face of nature and of history is changed. The heart finds God everywhere, and the presence of the "Great Companion" lights up even the dreariest place and the strangest experience. We may perhaps sometimes be half inclined to be incredulous, when we read,

"While place I seek or place I shun,
The soul finds happiness in none,
But with my God to guide my way,
'Tis equal joy to go or stay."

We may wonder whether Faber was expressing a sentiment, or a real experience, when he said,

“Ill that thou blessest is my good,
And unblest good is ill;
And all is right that seems most wrong,
If it be thy dear will.”

But we need not be incredulous nor wonder, for these stanzas only conform to the spontaneous language of Scripture. “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” It conforms to what has been felt in the lives of men and women, whom we, ourselves, have known. There was one I remember so well, who, some years ago, went to the hard and wretched West African Coast. But he did not lose there his perennial joy. His letters expressed his habitual cheer in the thought of the Divine Providence. “I see and know,” he says, for example, “a thousand difficulties, but above all is God and with joy and gladness of heart do I lift up my head and praise him, and not a weight remains, not a care, not a sore spot.” Once, after a long walk through a canon, he says, “Ah, how I enjoyed that walk, because there were plenty of boulders, and on those boulders I painted text after text, and then I cut them in and made them sure.”

For we may now add, especially, that the Christian pilgrim causes the vales through which he passes to become springs of blessing by his

benevolent spirit. For this is the characteristic grace of the Christian. "Love worketh no ill to the neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." But the mind which was in Christ was that which spared no pains to confer favors. If you have ever been on long camps and journeys, you will have noticed that sometimes things seem to be going wrong. It will be found that some one or more in the party is complaining or criticising, or else asserting or excusing himself. But have you not seen how others go quietly to work to put things to rights? They speak gently or firmly, as the case requires; they put the best face on what is untoward. In a little while, the camp is cheerful, the disorder has ceased. Oh, it is a moral miracle, what may be done by one whose principle and policy are not to make trouble but to make peace, not to look on his own things, but to care for the good of all. It is no surprise that Paul should have spoken such fine words in praise of charity. "Here abideth faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love." The tendency of toil and trouble, of hard places and hard experiences, is to turn the soul in upon itself. We think a great deal of what is against us. Thinking of that, we proceed to distribute here and

there the blame of it. The valley we were in was bad enough before, but now it is too bad to think of. We grow sour, censorious. Is there no good angel that can restore the sunlight and the cheer? There is. It is genuine good-will. It is the love of God and of man, the spirit that seeketh not its own. No matter through what valley it is our lot to be passing, sickness, loss, disappointment, whatever makes the eyes weep or the heart sore, it will change the aspect wonderfully, if we are able to think of the good of others as well as for our own good. But to do this is an instinct in Christian discipleship.

I have attempted, now, no formal or exhaustive treatment of a theme. But the thought suggested seems to me exceedingly important. Because we, Christians, are on the way to a promised home, because we can pass through no experience on the way, in which God is not present according to his gracious purpose, because we have come to love to be of service to our fellow-men, therefore we can not help making fountains to spring forth all along our route. What ought to be true is true also. The genuine disciples are what the Scriptures affirm, the salt of the earth, lights in the world. Of course, you and I may justly condemn ourselves; we may deplore that we are of so little

service; we may easily criticise many who bear the Christian name. Of course, the sharp-sighted censors, outside or inside the Church, may find little difficulty in pointing out the defects of us all. But, after all, it is true that the world is made a far happier place because so many genuine Christians are passing through it.

Let us put, therefore, the emphasis on the fact that the good of which our text speaks is realized on our journey. Attention is sometimes given too exclusively to the end of the way. To be saved is thought of rather than to be saving. To get through life and not make a failure at last, is spoken of as the main attainment. But, now and here, down in the vale of domestic cares, the perplexities of business, the worry about the things of this life, we do not expect to do much more than struggle. We have no time or strength to dig wells. But this is certainly not all that we may count upon. You may ride through many a long tract of country in this State, where the houses look poor and the farms untidy and unthrifty. You are tempted to ask, Why don't you put out a flower or two, or a tree? Oh, we are only renting the old shanty for a little while. Why don't you deal more generously by the land from which you take your yearly crops? Oh, we

have no title; we are just holding these lands for a year or so. But this should not be the Christian's way. Even if we are sojourners, it is in Immanuel's land. It is well for us to plant a rose in the yard, even if we are to leave it behind to-morrow. When Mrs. Riggs, of the mission to the Dakotas, was taking her first experiences in western travel fifty years ago, as she was preparing the tent for the first night, she was disposed to let the rough surface of the camping-ground remain rough, and not even gather grass for a bed on the ground; that it was for only one night. "But," said Dr. Williamson, "there will be a great many one nights." So, the good woman found, and learned that even for one night it is best to make the tent comfortable.

Let us put emphasis, also, on the suggestion that we are not to put off the good to be done till some future period or condition in the present life. We should begin digging our well in the valley which we are now passing. Boys and girls, young men and women, often hope to be useful some time; when they have gotten through school, or are established in business. But the present is your opportunity. When I am rich, I will be benevolent. But you cannot be one whit more benevolent when you are rich than when you are

poor. If I were not a poor widow, I would do something for the cause. But it was the poor widow who did the most. If my husband or wife, or father or mother, or children or neighbors, or teachers or scholars were different, I would be more serviceable. If I were living in some other place or went to some other church. If somebody I knew had dealt more honorably or showed me more attention. If I were in some other business. If I were in better health. So we go on thinking what we would do with a million, what we will do when we reach some other valley. But it is in this valley through which we are now passing that we are to set our streams flowing.

Let us put emphasis, likewise, on the fact that the Christian pilgrim, if he be intent on loving faithfulness, will exert influences in passing of which he may be very largely unconscious. He may dig wells from which, so far as he knows, no water flows or past which no wanderer travels. He passes on his way. He forgets what he tried to do, or regrets that his time and labor seem thrown away. But the water may flow afterward. It is not our formal, set attempts to do good which alone are useful. There is

“That best portion of a good man’s life,
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love.”

Christ was only passing Sychar. He had no special errand thither. His conversation was no elaborate discourse. Yet it told. As long as the world stands, that passing conversation will do its work for unknown multitudes.

The whole theme carries quick suggestion to many in our day, who are travelling from place to place. To look at trains of cars, it might seem as if nothing were done, nowadays, but travel. Our neighborhood and our congregations change. Vacations are well nigh universal. Thousands of people spend large portions of time in the country or by the sea-side, instead of at home. The temptation is to take a vacation from the Christian spirit, life and service, to do good in one vale but to be careless in some other. Are we not shown to-day that, wherever we are, we should maintain the same hope of immortality, the same submissive trust in the divine will, the same unselfish love? Circumstances and conditions change, but we must abide faithful. The beautiful story is told of a famous Danish preacher, that one went to hear him and was surprised to find him dispensing the word of life to so few persons. Why should he take pains with so small a number? I take my lesson, replied the preacher, from yonder spring by the road-side. There are times

when the spring is thronged, there are times when perhaps only a single poor way-farer stoops to drink. But whether there are many or few, the spring keeps right on, the volume of water is just as strong and the quality is just as pure and reviving. So, the true Christian maintains his love, faith and hope, whether with many or with few, whether present or absent, at the sea-side and among the mountains, in the place of his recreation as well as in the routine of church life at home.

The theme emphasizes the value of the new birth, the early formation of the decidedly Christian character. The valleys through which we are passing are thronged with the Philistine element. That element digs no wells and often stops up those fountains which are opened by Christian charity. It is wanton and selfish. They who seek to climb mountains and reach other favorite resorts often find that the gateways are closed. On inquiry, it will be ascertained that so many parties of pleasure-seekers have been ruthless and careless. They have cut down trees, they have destroyed fences, they have been negligent of their camp-fires, they have hunted and fished out every living thing. Of pilgrims of that sort the world tires. The world is too full of them.

They represent that great company who do not help, but hinder the kingdom of light. They leave every vale they visit worse rather than better. Neither home, nor neighborhood, nor church has more of heaven for their presence. It is in contrast with these barren and even hurtful lives that the true Christian pilgrimage takes on its incomparable worth and charm. If we really receive Christ into our life, we cannot fail of adding something to the faith and hope and righteousness of the families and communities to which we belong. How can any of us think of remaining in a position, that increases the sin with which the creation groans? The valleys through which our fellow-men are journeying are often very parched. Let us not be of the company who dry up what streams do flow. Let us be glad that there is one who has promised that if we join ourselves to him, he will cause that his truth shall be in us a well of water springing up unto eternal life, and that not to ourselves alone, but to our fellow-men.

IX.

TITUS AND HIS KIND.

“But thanks be to God who putteth the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus.”—2 COR. viii:16.

THE community of Christians gathered in Corinth by the labors of Paul, had been rent with divisions and sore tried by sins within its own membership. Rumors of how things had gone wrong came to Paul over the sea. Signs of a more favorable state had recently appeared, which gave the apostle good courage. Still, much remained to be done, in order that the Church in Corinth should well represent the name it bore. Paul was burdened with care for the cause there, as he was everywhere. If he could only be everywhere ! But he had one great comfort. If he could not be in Corinth himself, he had a younger man whom he could send. And that younger man, Titus, had the same earnest care that he had himself.

We may this morning take Titus to represent a certain type of men, whom God raises up in every age. As Titus took Corinth into his heart, so the

men of this type take the great interests of the Christian cause. The fact that God puts this spirit into these men is one great cause for thankfulness.

When any one passes the age of mere boyhood and begins really to front the facts, he will see that this is a very needy and sinful world. It is possible, and we all know how natural it is, for him to say with Cain, Am I my brother's keeper? this is a bad state of things I see, wherever I turn my eyes, but it is no concern of mine. The parable of the good Samaritan pictures the situation. The priest and Levite see the misery of the man who has been robbed, clearly enough, but what occurs to them is, that they may as well pass over to the other side, see as little as possible, and get on home before night. That way of taking life does not remedy the evils of the world. It increases them. But the Samaritan sort of man takes life quite differently. He is moved to lift the suffering traveller and set him on his own beast, and pay his charges at the inn. Surely that is the style of man which the world needs. And the question, whether any young person will be helpful, will share his part in carrying the burdens of our humanity, is one in which all good people have an intense interest.

For, think what a different person a young man will be, if God does put the cause of his fellow-men into his heart.

He will be nobler. For, of the two impulses which clamor to be followed, he has chosen the unselfish one. And we all know that this is the noble one, and the other is ignoble.

He is larger-souled. If he had elected to look out for himself, as the main thing, he would have shrunk so as to hold only himself. Now he has expanded so as to embrace the world.

His intellect takes wider range. For, otherwise, he would have been principally occupied with a set of facts relating to his own gratification or advantage; now he has before him a set of facts bearing on the welfare of millions; he is more intelligent, better informed.

His energies are intensified. For the greatness of the objects which solicit his interest make a call upon all there is in him. His hands find so much to do, that he must do with his might.

Now, if all the result was, that the young man becomes nobler, larger-souled, better informed, and his manhood's energies summoned to intenser exertion, he would have reason to be thankful. If to be weak is to be miserable, to be strong and full is to be blessed. And his friends and fellows have

reason for gratitude also. For a community made up of souls of this larger pattern may well rejoice.

But more especially is it a matter of rejoicing when God puts such unselfish earnestness into a youthful heart, because all this fuller manhood is set working for humanity. When Titus takes Corinth into his love, he not only becomes more of a man than he was, but this increased volume of his manliness goes to the good of Corinth. Because Saul of Tarsus became charged with anxiety in behalf of the great Gentile world of his time, he was transformed; there was more of him, and, besides, all these increased resources were spent in the interest of that world. When he was martyred at Rome, the moral valuation of the Empire had gone up by a large percentage. For the spiritual richness of this Jew had passed into the life of hundreds of Roman citizens.

It should be noted, moreover, that when God puts any cause into a young man's heart, it is a sign that Providence is preparing a divine blessing for that cause. If Titus is moved to undertake a mission to Corinth, he may count on the fact that God is moving to open the way for his mission. When John Henry Wichern became burdened in spirit on account of the neglected children in Hamburg, that burden was the token that the hour

was ripe for his effort. Other minds were ready to co-operate. So it proved. For he had not borne that earnest care long, before some one, not knowing his project at all, gave a sum of money to one of Wichern's friends for some charity. A few weeks later, a bequest of five thousand dollars was assigned to his disposal. And soon the noble piece of land on which the famous "Rauhe Haus" was built, was strangely put at his command.

How often men and women, who seemed to be all alone in their zeal for some work, have no sooner set themselves toward it, than they have been impressed that various things outside of them had been falling in with their errand! The solitary impulse which possessed them was itself a power in the world for good. But it was not solitary. Other minds were on the point of being moved by a similar impulse. Elijah was mistaken when he gave way to the feeling that he was the sole man in Israel who had a zeal for Jehovah. There were seven thousand men who would have been ready to follow his inspiration. So, often—perhaps always,—when a young man is impressed with some benevolent message, he may rest assured that somewhere, outside of him, the Divine Providence has been laying the train which is only waiting for him to set on fire.



It is an additional occasion for thankfulness that when God puts any cause into any one's heart, it so often turns out that the person is so singularly fitted to meet the exigency. If Titus had been the wrong man to discharge the trust of a mission to Corinth, Paul might have wished that the idea of Corinth had never entered the young man's head. It is possible that cases have occurred where an individual has been seized with a great passion for some Christian enterprise and those who knew him have said, we are sorry, for his capacity or adaptation are nowise equal to his passion. Nobody has more zeal for a good thing than a crank, but what a calamity to a cause a crank may be! Still, we are often mistaken in our judgment. For it has many times happened that a young man who wears the aspect of a crank and gets the name, develops into a remarkably wise instrument for some wise end. The generation that was afraid he would hurt the business of the Lord's house, live to wonder at his skill and efficiency. Certain it is that in a remarkable degree, when God puts a mission into a man's mind, he has put into the man himself a peculiar capability also. The young students, Judson, Nott, Newell, Mills and Hall, who were constrained to inaugurate the foreign missionary work

eighty years ago, had earnestness, and no one doubted that, but they showed also no common suitableness for their pioneer task. When a few weeks ago the one hundredth anniversary of Judson's birth was celebrated at Malden, the tributes paid were not merely to his rare devotion, but to his equally rare intellectual and personal force. The Rev. Dr. Peabody, the late pastor in Harvard University, did not hesitate to affirm that had Judson not given himself to the church, "there is no height of earthly station and renown which he might not have reached!"

In the story of the orphan asylum at La Force, in France, we are told that its founder fell in with a young beggar by the wayside one winter's evening, and took him home, giving him supper and bed. From a child of six years he had been a beggar, and had been thrown into prison as a vagabond, had contracted there his disease, and so Pastor Bost found himself with a cripple on his hands. The youth, though utterly without education, easily learned. But he was physically weak, and what could be done with him? In the kind and Christian atmosphere of the asylum, his heart had been touched with the Divine love. And while his benefactor was thinking how to dispose of him, the beggar sent in a request for aid to qualify

himself to become a teacher! He was sent to the training school for two years and a half, and when sixty-five persons were examined for approbation, this poor waif stood at the top of the list; and as just then the pastor was looking for the proper person to take charge of his newly built school, the proper person was ready at hand. For many years has this divinely furnished teacher fitted exactly into the divinely furnished place. The story of benevolent work would furnish equally striking illustrations of the fact, that when God inspires in the soul an earnest care, there is so often associated with it some excellent qualification, which calls for grateful recognition.

Notice, again, that God's work in such hearts as Titus is a matter for thanks, since it leads and qualifies men to do those moral tasks of this world, which otherwise would be too difficult or even repulsive. The business of overcoming the world, resisting those currents of one's age which are at variance with righteousness, is always difficult. Often it is repulsive. That is, it cannot be done without bringing us into connections which are not at all to our natural taste. Take an extreme case, that of the lepers. They are a needy and pitiful class. The secular papers even have drawn attention to the labors of that priest who

had been living in the leper colony on the Islands, until he succumbed himself to the foul disease ; and to the successor, who has lately offered himself to stand in his place. We, all of us, feel that that is a kind of service to which our whole nature would be utterly disinclined. It is hard to conceive how any one could undertake such benevolent labor unless somehow the condition of those wretched creatures had come to sink into the heart. Or, let us call up the story of the Moravians from the beginning. Among them it has been a generally accepted sentiment and principle to go to those races and regions of the world in which the degradation is most marked and where even missionaries regard life as specially undesirable. We very well understand if such service is to be rendered for our humanity, it must be some extraordinary impulse of love that prompts it. Now, there is an immense amount of work to be done in a sinful world which is of this sort. The great masses of our kind are not in themselves such as one would choose for companionship. I am told that there was in a certain city of California a church which was composed partly of Armenian Christians. But the church has had small congregations ; because the Americans were loth to worship in the same house with the foreigners ;

and this because the habits of the Armenians were not cleanly according to our standard. When I heard of it, there came up to my sight the forms of those choice and refined men and women whom I have known, who have spent their lives in the society of this same people in their native land, gone in and out of those disagreeable cottages, which often are more what we call hovels. But the Armenians are a high-class people, compared with a great many races, among which benevolent labors are to be wrought. And there are thousands of our own countrymen, who are white, to say nothing of those who are colored, that are fearfully needy of moral elevation ; and yet there is no probability that any ordinary motives will prompt their fellow-citizens to do among them the kind of work likely to lift them from their low estate. We can, all of us, exclaim against the filth and vice of our California Chinatowns and of our slums. It is only some few whose hearts God has touched, who are moved to do anything in downright earnestness and patience to enlighten and Christianize. If there be anything for which the average citizen, comfortably situated, clothed, temperate and fairly educated, should be thankful, it is that God does put into some hearts the earnest care which leads them to devote them-

selves to humane services, from which the rest of us shrink.

There is one more consideration suggestive of the same gratitude. It is that when God puts the fully Christian care for any community in any one's soul, that soul is led to undertake a large and thorough service in its behalf. If we would appreciate the largeness and comprehensiveness and wisdom of the genuine missionary, let us read over carefully the Epistles to the Corinthians and, indeed, St. Paul's Epistles generally. We shall be impressed with the fact that Paul was not in the field to ride a hobby, and we may be sure that Titus, whom he sent in his place, was of the same comprehensive purpose. We have reason, of course, to be grateful that men are raised up who are interested in particular directions of improvement. As for instance, some men are moved to give a public library or to donate a park, or to put up a fountain in the street of a city, or to advocate prohibition, or to found a semi-benevolent insurance union. The blessed peculiarity of the class of men who are represented by Titus is that they take the whole interest of man into their affections. They care for the entire man, spirit, soul and body, and for each part of him according to its worth. They would make the

society into which they enter Christian from center to circumference. Take, for an illustration, the result of sixty years' pastoral labor by John Frederick Oberlin in the villages of La Roche. Nine thousand acres of sterile soil, no roads and the rudest paths ; the people poor, indolent, ignorant. Yet, when his work was done ; good roads, bridges and dwellings ; the desolate region a garden ; the language even had become pure ; schools, sunday schools, orphan houses and churches had been erected. All had sprung from the mission of one who believed that the law of all thorough-going reformation is in the sayings of Christ, "Ye must be born again"; "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." If one visits any of the fields where any of our American missionaries' work has been well prosecuted at home and abroad, he will see the same comprehensive results springing out of this Christian care of the fields with which they have identified their lives. Or, for instance, when that young Englishman, William Duncan, felt his soul drawn toward the elevation of those far away Indians in British Columbia, how broad was the meaning of the word, salvation, which he went to teach. It meant not only individual souls redeemed, but

a Christian village, with its temperance, peace, thrift, well-ordered society. How great a good there was for that people hidden in that young man's heart!

There is, every way we can look at it, abundant reason why we should feel just as Paul did, when we see that any young friend seems to have had formed within him an earnest care, such as the apostle noticed in his friend and helper, Titus. For we have seen (1) that he becomes a nobler and richer being ; and (2) that all the richer manhood is held for the benefit of human life ; and (3) that this impulse is a sign and pledge of some divine blessing making itself ready ; and (4) that such care so often makes one wonderfully adapted to the work he is moved to undertake, and (5) that it enables one to undertake needed moral tasks otherwise too difficult or repulsive, and finally, that when the impulse comes along the line of the Scriptural teaching, it embraces within it so comprehensive and thorough an endeavor.

It is a great thing for anyone who is beginning to approach the more decisive periods of youth, to find in himself a strong desire to do some of the service which Christ has to offer for the world. That is what is usually thought of Christ himself when twelve years of age. "Wist thou not that I

must be about my Father's business?" How different is this impulse from that of so many boys and girls who have taken nothing but passing fun, or ease, or the lower gains into their thought! What a glad change that is in our children, when we find that they have begun to go out of themselves and to set their affections on some career that is likely to leave the world better? Does this movement of God's Spirit sometimes break in upon your lighter hours? Is there, even while we speak this morning, a divine suggestion coming home to any child or youth leading into this larger direction? By all means, let it have room; let it lead you; cherish it.

It was said, about the opening of the present year, that some fifteen hundred or two thousand young people in our schools and colleges had expressed themselves as ready, if the way opened, to offer themselves to Christ's work in foreign lands. If that were a well-founded statement, how much it meant for those persons, and how much it meant for the welfare of the nations! To be sure, it is not necessary for us all to take to heart some particular land beyond the seas. But it is necessary for us to take to heart the moral necessities of our age somewhere, not as a sort of general sentiment, but as something to which our nature draws in all its fibre.

This course of thought emphasizes the interest which Christian churches and all well-wishers of mankind have in institutions of learning. For it is such institutions in which are most likely to be found those young people who are smitten with the great Christian passion for overcoming the world. It is these institutions which, when one is already smitten with this passion, foster it, and furnish the facilities by which those who do want to be useful may be trained to the most efficiency. That is what gives the rare interest with which our own seminary is regarded by us who are most nearly related to its conduct. We stand at its doors, and who are they who may be expected to apply and whom it is a pleasure to welcome ? They are those who tell us : God has put in my heart the cause of Christ in this or in distant countries ; I am drawn out in my sympathies toward the kingdom of the Saviour ; I want to be fitted to share the burdens of those who are already in the field and to take the place of those who are to soon drop by the way. And we wish that all the Churches should be interested both to encourage these young men to devote themselves to this high calling, and also to enlarge the resources and increase the power of the institution itself.

X.

WHAT MADE CHRIST MARVEL.

“And when Jesus heard it, he marvelled.”—MATT. 8:10.

WE are familiar with the fact that our Saviour was an object of wonder. The prophet predicted that his name should be called “the wonderful.” The people who heard him wondered at his gracious words. His miracles astonished the multitudes that witnessed them. Men like Nicodemus and Pilate marvelled at him. He avoided ostentation; he was the opposite of what we understand by sensational; yet his career from beginning to end was a surprise. But have we inquired whether he was ever surprised himself? He came to this earth, we say, from heaven; did he find anything here that amazed him? He had an unusual knowledge; he knew beforehand what was in men’s minds and what was going to happen in his own and other men’s lives; he seemed strangely prepared for all the sequences and exigencies in his sojourn among

men ; was it possible that such a being should meet any experiences which would arouse in his soul the emotion of wonder? Our text gives at least one occasion when Christ marvelled ; there may be others ; and what struck him as a marvel may be suggestive to us.

Twice in our Lord's life, we are told that he was surprised at the disclosure to him of the evil in his fellow-men. We know that he was too deep-sighted to have roseate views of human character at any time. He had charity ; but his charity did not blind his vision. Beneath all the plausible surfaces of society, his pure spirit saw the plague-spot of our humanity. He came to call sinners to repentance. Doubtless, no day passed in which, however, his fresh contact with sinners did not newly and powerfully impress him with the wonder there is in sin. People with dulled moral sense, acquainted with the world, expect to see dishonesty, falsehood. But they would regard it as a mark of quite too much simplicity to be shocked by dishonesty and falsehood. But our Lord's acquaintance with the world never dulled his perception. He did not get so used to evil as to lose the sense of its evil. Must not sin always excite fresh surprise in a holy mind?

But on two occasions we are distinctly told that

this astonishment struck deep into the Master's Spirit. Once, when he went to Nazareth, where was his home. He taught in the synagogue there. Many who heard him were astonished at the wisdom with which he spake and the mighty works he wrought. But when they bethought themselves that they had known his mother and brethren for years, they rejected his claims. Then it is said "he marvelled at their unbelief." For he had come to his own and his own received him not. Those who had the very best opportunity to test his claims, turned away from him. Some trivial local feeling shut their eyes to his spiritual superiority. And you remember that we are elsewhere told, and much later than this, that his own brothers did not believe in him. It was strange, it was strangely sad, to him that he could come so near to his townsmen and yet they did not perceive the marks of his Messiahship; or if they perceived them, they allowed so small pretexts to steel their hearts against him. But, I query, my friends, whether there be not similar occasion for marvel on account of many in these Christian lands. Christ has been illuminating all the centuries; he is cleansing and saving human souls in far distant lands; and yet, right here, among the sons and daughters of our Christian homes, how

many there are who do not trust him and yield their hearts to him ; they may wonder at his wisdom and mighty works, but personally they have no part or lot with him.

There was another and most significant occasion when the evil in the world deeply shadowed the spirit of our Lord. It was the night of the betrayal. It was in Gethsemane. He taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly amazed and sore troubled. In one sense, there could be nothing new to him in the events that were about to take place. He had expected them. He had predicted them. Still, experience is a different thing from anticipation. And Jesus was passing into the experience of the evil, baseness, malignity, utter blackness of human sin. It was to be revealed to him in the weakness of his disciples, in the denial of Peter, the treachery of Judas, the perjury of the witnesses against him, the shameful injustice of the Sanhedrim, the madness of the mob, the indifference or scorn of the general mass of men who should wag their heads as they should pass by his cross. The shadow of all this coming experience fell heavily into the soul of the Redeemer. "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death." I do not presume to say that this was all the darkness that he experienced.

He drank a cup which no other being has been called to drink. But it is not presuming to say that the amazement which is spoken of as having suddenly overpowered him in the garden, was in great part occasioned by the disclosure there made to him of the intrinsic and unutterable enormity that belongs to the sinful heart. He felt it to the quick. The condemnation of it went through him. He had identified himself so closely with the race he came to save, that the sight now given him of the terrible wickedness that is possible to us all, was too much for him to bear. He was amazed at the severity of the malady he had undertaken to heal.

But we may wonder at the good we find, as well as at the evil that confronts us. And our text suggests one instance at least in our Saviour's life, when he was surprised at the confidence that was reposed in him. It was reposed by a centurion, and therefore, doubtless, a foreigner. It was accompanied by a lowly estimate of himself on the part of this foreigner. "I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof." The confidence was absolute. "Speak the word and my servant shall be healed." And when Jesus heard it, he marvelled. His marvel was admiration. For he said to those that followed him, "Verily, I have

not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." It was so sweet to find in unexpected places that trust which he failed to find in Nazareth.

"Ah, Grace, into unlikeliest hearts
It is thy boast to come,
The glory of thy light to find
In darkest spots a home."

It is not said expressly in any other passage, that our Saviour admired the grace that he saw in men. But there are several other passages in which he expresses himself in the warm language of admiration. For example, recall the case of that woman who came crying to him for her daughter's sake, away on the very borders of Tyre and Sidon, and who turned so neatly the remark the Lord made to her about the impropriety of taking the children's bread and casting it to the dogs, "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith!"

Or, we may cite the story of the woman who came in to the house of Simon, the Pharisee, and in such an excess of emotion wet the Saviour's feet with tears, and anointed them. Over against the suspicious surprise of the Pharisee, note the strain of wondering appreciation with which the Master defended her: "Wherefore I say unto thee: her sins, which are many, are forgiven: for she loved

much." One might have expected some demonstrations of respect from the rich and polite Pharisee; the marvel was that the best tribute of honor should have come from a woman whom the Pharisee loathed.

Or, call to mind the familiar narrative of how, while he was sitting down over against the treasury, there came a poor widow and cast in her two mites. Few people noticed her gift. There was one, and he, the best judge of all, who admired it. "Verily, I say unto you, this poor widow cast in more than all they."

Once more, we could not well fail to adduce the instance of Mary, of Bethany. She did what Judas, and others, thought an extravagant waste. But her great love divined what was both most timely and appropriate. Her act was appreciative. It was received with notable admiration by our Lord; and he uttered the remarkable prediction, "Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

It is an exceedingly pleasant thought to me that our Saviour, who found so much reason to be surprised and appalled at the unbelief and the blackness, too, of the human heart, should nevertheless have been led not unfrequently to admire also

qualities in the human character. Those who are sharp to see the evil in mankind often seem unable to note that which is good. That which appears good they are inclined to suspect. Our Saviour sounded men to the depths. He exposed their deceit, hypocrisy and malice with an unsparing severity. He taught that unless the heart were changed and cleansed by a thorough renovation, there was no place for it in the kingdom of heaven. But this did not prevent his seeing quickly and with unstinted praise every, the least, sign of holy character. Even the cup of water given in his name should not lose its reward. Do we not sometimes think that all that we can expect, even if we are Christian disciples, is to be tolerated in the kingdom of God? Let us remember that there were persons in the number of our Lord's early followers who were not tolerated only, but admired. The Master was surprised, gratefully surprised, at the graces that appeared in them.

The suggestion does not seem far-fetched that a Christian church should be characterized by an admiring spirit on the part of the members toward each other. We sometimes hear a certain circle of persons spoken of as a mutual admiration society. Such a circle is often thought to make itself ridiculous as well as offensive. No doubt there is some

danger of this. But that danger would come because of something selfish and shallow in the members. To praise people principally because they happen to belong to our set is no high thing to do. But who can properly stigmatize or undervalue that spirit in a company of disciples, which makes them quick to recognize the Christian qualities which reside each in the others? Surely the lesson we take to-day from the Master would not lead us that way. The most beautiful things I see anywhere on this earth are Christian faith, love and hope. Sometimes, in the exercise of a critical judgment, and remembering what is taught us of the high standard of true religion, I see spots large and dark in all human characters. I see an end of all perfection. Nothing, then, seems so offensive as great pretensions. But I remember how the Lord spoke about the centurion, and about those women alluded to to-day, and so of how much there is to admire in my brethren and sisters within the Christian church. Let us not wait till they are dead before we allow our minds to dwell on their excellence.

We do well to direct our thoughts, a moment, to what those qualities were which won our Lord's admiration. It may be said, in general, that those for whom he expressed his appreciation, were

people who had the least thought that they were doing or saying anything admirable. It never entered into the centurion's mind that the Master would say such a fine thing of him. Perhaps he had never known that faith was such a notable grace ; or if he had, he had never dressed himself up in it. He had a great want in his heart. The Master had shown himself worthy and able to meet that want. He had gone out and treated him as if he were worthy and able. That was all. So with all these persons who won approval. They had a lowly opinion of themselves, but they trusted and loved, and were glad to do anything they might for their King or his cause. Self righteousness was something exceedingly unlovely to Christ. His severest words were spent against it. But simple devotion to what was most worthy of one's confidence and one's love, with humble estimation of one's self, that was beautiful to him. This shows itself in the picture of the final acceptance of those who shall be rewarded for their ministration to Christ, when he was sick or in prison. Ah, but say the righteous, we never knew that we did these services to you. Yes, but what matter, if ye did not know it. All the better, you did them, and did not know how much you were doing.

The desire for admiration is very strong in our

hearts. It is not a wholly unworthy desire. So much depends on whose approval it is we seek to gain and what it is we would have approved. To know that we are admired may be not only a great and deep satisfaction ; but it may give us lowly estimate of ourselves and grateful feelings to God. To be assured that some one whom we have reason to reverence has expressed his glad appreciation of us, can hardly fail to add incentive to us to live worthily. It must have been a rare pleasure to those women who saw that what they did was admired by the great Master. Very likely, most of us who sit at the table of the Saviour to-day, have rarely ventured to think that anything we have ever been or done will ever be thought of by the Master as wonderful. "Wood, hay, stubble," that is all ; very common ordinary building, we think. And we are right about it, most likely. The Master himself has put the matter in that way, too. For, "doth the Master thank the servant because he did the things which were commanded. Even so ye, also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, "We are unprofitable servants ; we have done that which it was our duty to do." If we could only say as much as that without a mortifying conscience, we would be satisfied! And yet, as I understand the Gospel,

there are those who, though judged by the law of duty, have come short, are yet admired, by their Redeemer, because they have, out of great confidence in him and great gratitude to him, made it their pleasure to serve him. And have we not ourselves met with those whose Christian character seemed so true, that we could not help thinking that they must be dear to the Master also ? If you and I were to flatter ourselves that he would see something admirable in us, that might be taken possibly as pretty certain proof that he would not. But it is not quite so with respect to others. Of them, it is not presumption to say, they shall walk in white, for they are worthy. And though you and I, amid our various imperfections, must prevailingly be afraid that our Saviour marvels at our slow and cold faith and is amazed that, considering all he has done for us, and is doing for us, our defects are so glaring; yet may there not be moments when we just faintly, at least, think that there were and are those whom he actually admires ? The suggestion that after all he may yet see something in us which will make us actually welcome in his presence, cannot fail to give a cheer and an incentive to us. For would it not be a pleasure, deep as the sea of glass that is before the throne, to receive, not merely the for-

giveness of our sins, but the admiring acceptance of our Redeemer? Wherefore, I may close with the exhortation of the disciple whom Jesus loved, "And now, little children, abide in him ; that, if he shall be manifested, we may have boldness and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

XI.

GLORIFYING THE OWNER.

“And ye are not your own ; for ye were bought with a price ; glorify God, therefore, in your body.”—1 COR. vi: 19, 20.

FEW words have occurred more frequently in religious speech than the word glorify. Very likely, it is less used now-a-days. One who should employ it often might be regarded as old-fashioned. It must often have been used with a vague impression as to its meaning. Yet our religious thought would be impoverished without it. But it needs to be set in connection with some grand and thorough thought of God and of our relation to him. It is set in such connection in our text. For the apostle reasons from two great fundamental facts. (1) By our very existence as dependent beings, we are not our own ; (2) by the love wherewith God has loved us in the gift of his son, we have been bought with a price. Surely, if these two facts are clear in our mind, then the conclusion drawn by Paul here, must have some fresh force with us ; “therefore glorify God.”

For it may fairly be presumed that the owner of anything, especially, if he be the designer and maker, and have put his loving thought into it, will be the best judge of the use of it. We may take for granted, also, that when his thought about it is most fully carried out, the thing owned will appear to greatest advantage. This may not always be so among men. The man who happens to be the owner of a piece of land or of any work of art, sometimes is ignorant, devoid of taste or skill. His land would be much better improved, if he would allow his neighbor to cultivate it ; his machine would work more efficiently if other hands than his own worked it. That is because so much of human proprietorship is accidental. But other things being equal, we may suppose the owner's or inventor's ideas respecting the use of what is his own will be better than those of any one else. It is reasonable to think if we have seen a genius like Edison, spending for years his best thought on the apparatus for furnishing light by electricity, experimenting patiently, and perfecting his work ; it is reasonable to think that the more nearly the apparatus is handled according to his directions, the greater will be the success. Sometimes, we know, an invention does not succeed at first for the very reason that those who



are trying it, try to run it after their own notions rather than according to the plans of the inventor.

Suppose now the case where the ownership is divine, where the designer is God. In this case, we need not say that the thing owned will probably work best, if worked according to the divine thought. There are no limitations here. We know that his thought is the best. "As for God, his way is perfect." It follows, therefore, that when the designs of God are realized in the conduct of any work of his hands, the result will be glorious. There have been sculptors, whose conceptions were such that all men knew that, if those conceptions were wrought out in marble, the world would admire not only the marble, but the artist also. All that was necessary in order to bring the artist fame, was to put his thought into stone. All that is necessary to bring glory to the owner of this universe is for men to use it according to the divine plan.

It has been said, I know, by some one, that in our day the heaven and earth do not declare the glory of God ; they declare rather the glory of the great discoverers and inventors. The telegraph glorifies Morse, the steam-engine, Watt or Stephenson ; in the halls of the sciences, much of the admiration which is paid goes as incense to the

memory of a Newton, a Faraday, an Agassiz or a Darwin. Honor be to all to whom it is due. But some of the noblest inventors and discoverers have felt that all which they have done has been only to find the truth in the works of God. The greatest glory that has come from their efforts has been the disclosure of the marvellous treasures with which the Creator has filled the world. The astronomer Kepler, who ascertained the laws which pertain to the motions of the planets, had no idea that what he had done in the matter was the special occasion for praise. His reverent and suggestive language has been repeated again and again, and deserves to be repeated. "O, God, I think thy thoughts after thee!" One who is familiar with men engaged in scientific researches, is reminded of how sensitive they often are as to the question of priority of observation. The one who notices any phenomenon first, or proposes any solution first, is anxious to have the credit of it. A few days or even minutes of anticipation might establish his fame among his contemporaries and in the history of the sciences. But no man, who really deserves such credit, thinks that the true glory of discovery centers in himself. The grand thing is that one more truth of the creation has been brought to light. His glass has made visible one

more star in the heavens, and that star glorifies the author of nature, rather than him who has only observed it.

All the research and art, therefore, of our time only emphasize and illustrate the fact that there are inexhaustible depths of beauty and utility in every product of God's mind. Whoever searches those depths and brings anything there to light, so far forth, discloses God's glory. He may not intend it. He may even deny the existence of the Creator. Still he cannot help showing something more of the divine excellence. Why, suppose there has been a barren spot before your door ; you cultivate it ; put into it choice seeds ; it will soon be a bed of flowers. Every time you look at it, you may see only your own cultivation, your spade, your hoe, your rake, your taste : but you have really only revealed to some devout mind the beauty of the being whom you yourself have forgotten. We cannot make anything that is really beautiful, we cannot be really true and genuine in our studies and our daily work, without increasing thereby the visible glory of the earth, and so, the glory of him who made the earth.

Joseph Paxton was at first only the gardener of the Duke of Devonshire. But when, in 1851, the

first Crystal Palace arose in its symmetry before an admiring world, it made his fame. He became noble in men's eyes before the Queen gave him the title of a knight. But it has been said that the idea of the Crystal Palace was suggested to his mind in part by observing the wonderful provision made for bearing up the very broad leaf of a lily which had been brought from the marshes of Guiana and which he had trained in his conservatories. That regal lily with its slender stem upholding its broad leaf, that palace of industry suggested by the lily, with its slender iron columns sustaining the broad roof, and the patient, observing gardener, who took the hint from the lily and erected the palace, all made the name of the creator more excellent to thoughtful minds.

It is plain, then, that whenever any of us use our bodies and our minds, our whole selves, after the plan of the Heavenly One, and just so far as we do so, we make his worth to appear. For a man, perfectly answering all the ends contemplated in the mind of the Creator, would be more beautiful than a lily, grander than the noblest temple which has ever been built upon the earth. For if we would take the word honest

in a large sense, the line of the poet so often quoted is true:

“An honest man is the noblest work of God.”

If we were to conceive, therefore, of an entire race of men, who were answering the divine ideas in their life as fully as the bee answers it in building and storing its cell, who were observant of all known, and studious of all unknown laws, in body and mind, in nature and in society, it were easy to see that such people would reflect honor on their maker. It would be hardly necessary for them to hold praise-services in order to show that honor. Their rightly ordered conversation would be itself a perpetual anthem.

But suppose, on the contrary, what we know to be the real condition of the world, that sin has entered and deranged the course of human character and life. The laws of the body, of soul and of spirit, have been violated or grossly neglected. As a consequence, it has become difficult to know what these laws really are. The whole head of humanity is sick and its whole heart faint. The rules of health are not the regimes of sickness. At least, they are not a sufficient remedy. Besides, the very disposition to return to them is wanting. But even in a sinful world, God is still owner.

He still has plans for the highest good of his creatures. Only, now these must be plans of restoration, not merely of construction. The process can not be as if the house were to be built new from the foundation. The original design having been perverted, what remains is to reconstruct.

But, as it is the Divine owner who is to reconstruct, we may expect that there will be depths of divine glory in the redeeming, as there were in the creative plan. God will put into the new creation a wonder which surpasses all that is in the old. He will put in all the wealth of his own perfections. A love, passing knowledge, will be given without stint or measure. The only beloved son himself will at personal cost enter into humanity. He will glorify the Father, as no marvel of the ocean, or the stars, or of human history had glorified him. One greater than the temple will walk in the streets of earth. One fairer than any of the sons of men will task himself to prepare for us what neither eye had seen nor ear heard, neither had it entered into the heart of man to conceive.

It might be expected, then, that whoever should carry out the idea of the Redeemer in his body, would glorify God in a most signal degree. This expectation has been realized. Let us suppose that Saul of Tarsus, now an intense, zealous and

persecuting Jew, becomes convinced that he has been bought from his unrighteous harshness and narrowness by the love of the Son of God, and that God's plan for him is that henceforth he should live not to himself, but to him who died for him and rose again. Does any one doubt whether the transformation in Paul will be glorious ? We know it was, for it made such an impression on mankind that millions of people in every century since have been kindled to enthusiasm at the mention of his name. Does any one doubt whether the God whom St. Paul preached in the great cities of the Roman world did not, ever after, seem more glorious to the men and women there than ever they had dreamed any divine name could be before ? Men did not have to construct an argument. They spontaneously inferred that the Being who had redeemed Paul must be one to love and adore.

What took place in this one case has taken place, we might say without extravagance, every hour of these eighteen centuries somewhere on the earth. Men, who were far from what they ought to have been, have seen and adopted the plan of their restoration, which has been written down in the New Testament. Then a restoration has commenced ; it may have been rapid or slow, but it has been

fair to see, as its walls rose so as to be seen by men. I know how easy it is to find defects in all human beings. People go far to see St. Peter's at Rome. There are serious defects in that structure ; so serious, that critics have spoken of it with the most severe depreciation. Yet, there is something about the grandeur of the idea in it, and not a little in many of the details, which compels admiration. So it is with Christian character. It is easy to pick flaws in it. One need not be an expert to do that. But after all, it is the most admirable treasure that human history shows. However much the Balaams may jest about it, or curse it, there are few of them who do not, sooner or later, say, Let me die the death of the righteous and my last end be like his ! How natural it was for the Hebrews to define the Being whom they worshipped as the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob ! So, one who has rejoiced in a father, mother, sister, friend, whose redeemed life remains as his holiest memory, will find himself forming many of his thoughts of God by help of such association. God is best realized to his mind as the God of his mother or his revered friend. I often recur to those, in recollection of whom I can say, How excellent, my most true and tried friend, did your God seem to me ; so that I felt constrained, years ago, to say, as

Ruth to Naomi, "Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God." Little did you think you were glorifying God in my eyes. But it was so. In what he wrought in you, I beheld the beauty of his holiness. If I should lose the sense of the divine excellence in my own experience, or if I should miss the clue in the mazes of the strange world I live in, I could not for a moment cease to admire the God who was made known to me, in his grace and truth, by the heart and life of some of those redeemed ones whom I have known.

If I have made my course of thought clear, I have shown what it is for one who is not his own to glorify his Maker and Redeemer. It is by the honest decision on his part to carry out, so far as he knows, the plan of God. Of course, we, all of us, are likely to have some petty purpose which may seem to suit us better. We may conclude that we will do what we have to do in our own way. Even so, we may, as I have shown, despite ourselves, contribute in some degree to the glory of God. We may make some spot of earth or some home dearer, or disclose some truth which will stir some other heart to his advantage. But this is a very imperfect realization of the precept in our text. We need to say, and without any reservation, to God, I am not my own; I am

bought with a price ; what wouldst thou that I should do in the world ? We need to open our eyes, too, and read what is made known to us in the Divine Providence and in the Bible, and by the Spirit of God within us. And our theme assures us that if we do thus in our hearts purpose to carry out the Divine idea for us, we shall surely do something which will adorn the doctrine, and we shall make our Heavenly Father seem holier and dearer to some of those who journey with us, or are to follow after us.

We see, also, that glorifying God is not accomplished by the mere language or feeling of praise. The Psalmist does indeed say, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me ;" and that is true, but he adds, "And to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God." The builder of a temple does not glorify the architect simply by uttering compliments of him to the visitors or showing them the fine drawings, nor by certain sentiments of admiration which he expresses toward the architect himself. But if he will take the drawings and possess his mind with them and put them into stone, the result will confer the greatest possible honor.

We see, also, that obedience to God, the putting of our life into his direction, is not, as might be

supposed by some, a hard, ungraceful thing to do. The landscape gardener may sometimes appear to his men to be very particular in his directions ; they may be tempted to imagine that he ordered them to do so and so just because he loved to be obeyed. But let it be supposed that his plans are ideally the best and that deviations from them will be sure to make blemishes in the landscape, then compliance is excellence, the exact following of the lines drawn for us a following of the curve of perfect grace. They who think that obedience is required because God wishes to assert authority, do not seem to know what kind of a being God is. Yielding our plan of life to his is simply reaching out after perfection.

We may likewise look at the tone of insistence, which is employed in the Gospel, in its true light. That should not surprise us. For his plans are now for the restoration of that which we have already ruined or are now in process of ruining. They have involved a costly price. If it were now possible for us to repair the damage already incurred, if our moral beauty could be restored by any scheme of our own devising, God would not stand on his position or dignity. But the long history of our race has shown how fruitless the attempts of men for salvation have been. There-

fore the owner and Redeemer does insist, as a physician, called in straits of life and death, insists that his prescription be followed without variation. If it were only his own will or reputation which was in his mind, he might leave the matter to the patient's own choice. So here the deliverance of the captive soul depends upon the price with which he has been bought. Let him play fast and loose with the saving plan of his owner, and there is no other price that can avail for him.

It is plain, therefore, that our own glory and the glory of the world that now is, as well as of that which is to come, is bound up with the voluntary conformity of our plan of life to that which is made known in the Gospel. As long as we act at cross purposes with the Divine claims, things here and hereafter will certainly work against us. But as soon as we quit the policy of self-ownership and fall into line with him who bought us with a price, we shall begin to have the anticipation of that which is symbolized in the description of that heavenly city concerning which it is said, "The glory of God did lighten it and the Lamb is the light thereof."

It follows, finally, that the conception we have been considering makes the lowliest life, which is really lived in the spirit of harmony with God,

worth living. I know how imperfect we often seem to those who look on. I know how painfully we often sigh because what we are doing seems so poor to ourselves. It shames us. In so many cases, too, a blight comes into men's best endeavors. The world goes against them. They are misunderstood, thwarted, and life seems a failure. Can mere submission and perseverance in well doing, in such conditions, bring any glory to God? They can. How beautiful and comforting for such is that picture which is drawn of the blind spinner:

“Like a blind spinner in the sun
I tread my days,
I know that all the threads will run
Appointed ways;
I know each day will bring its task,
And, being blind, no more I ask.

I know not why, but I am sure
That tint and place,
In some great fabric to endure
Past time and race,
My threads will have.”

Ah, yes, all work that is done in harmony with the Divine, will take on by and by the form of the finished web; the threads we weave in this common life will have tint and place in some

great fabric, some cloth of gold, that shall cover the steps of the heavenly throne. For it is not true religion that leaves life a drudgery ; it idealizes our common existence and work. It says, as St. Paul said even to the slaves of his time : adorn the doctrine ; you have something higher to live for than even your own good ; you may even glorify God, making the very world that he has made richer, fuller, fairer, because you have lived in it.

XII.

CALLED BY HER OWN NAME.

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master."

—JOHN 20: 15, 16.

WHAT a difference it made with Mary whether she was addressed by the common name, woman, or by the individual name, Mary! When she heard herself called woman, she supposed it was the gardener, some unknown keeper of the grounds, and the speaker had only the interest for her which any guide-board would have. But the instant she heard herself called Mary, all her nature was moved to its depths and uttered itself in the one word of recognition, reverence and affection, Rabboni.

A similar difference it must make with us all, according as we conceive our Lord addressing us, following us, caring for us, as if he knew us by name, or knew us simply as one of a multitude.

I cannot hesitate to think and teach that the former is eminently the Biblical conception; that with respect to us all who are here this morning, our Lord knows us, not merely as members of the human race, but as individuals whom he can name. When you are told, therefore, that he is speaking to you in his Word to-day, do not think he is saying, man, woman, boy, girl, but rather, William, Mary; he has personally to do with each of us.

Let it be granted that there are difficulties in the way of his conception.

We think, perhaps, that the Saviour might have had his peculiar interest in Mary Magdalene, because he did know her as one neighbor knows another; or even in a goodly number of those whom he chose as his companions when he was in Capernaum or Nazareth; but now that the company of his disciples has swollen to millions, in all lands, in many languages, of various races, we are extremely prone to think that this acquaintance by name is impossible, or at least extremely improbable. Very few of the people of the world do we recognize. We see the masses along the streets, or pouring on and off cars or boats, but we do not presume to nod our heads to one of a hundred, or a thousand. If we love

the church, as we do so often sing, "I love thy church, O God," yet it is as a whole, not as so many particular persons. Its individuals are lost in the multitude, as the separate grains of wheat are lost in the vast number of grains that go to make up the great harvest of the world. Does the shipping merchant have any interest in any one kernel? So they fill his contract, what matter to him their single history? So the church of Christ we may not hesitate to regard as a matter of concern to him. But it concerns him, we judge, as an army is cherished by its commander. When we read, as very likely we have read, of a Napoleon stopping by the roadside to inquire of some ordinary laborer, Were you not with me in Egypt? Did you not belong to the Army of the Nile? We feel sure that such must have been an exceptional case, even with that marvellous commander of men. The great multitudes must have marched and died unknown. Christ may love his church, but not its members.

Moreover, we fall to thinking, and not merely to thinking, but feeling, how inconspicuous, obscure, disagreeable even, we, George, Elizabeth, are. A small portion of us make any mark in our time. You need not suppose, said a mirth-

some friend, that you are the greatest man in your city, for I inquired of a citizen, who has lived there several years, and he said he had never heard of such a person. No, indeed, how very small the circle which most of us fill. The mark, too, which some make fades out so soon. I note often the death of men, without whom in my boyhood it were difficult to see how the world, or some most important affairs of the world, could prosper. Those men filled the public eye. What they said and did, or wrote, made a chief part of the current history. But they have for years been retired and unknown, and the world has moved on since as if they had never lived. Go back, for instance, to your native town. You remember some person there, who stood prominent in all its affairs and its social life. He has passed away. It seems almost like base ingratitude for everything to be going as if there had been no loss. In presence of such contemplations, the individuality even of the men of mark appears so evanescent.

"Like the snow-fall in the river,
A moment white, then melts forever."

But the eminent people, the Mary Magdalenes, the Augustines, the Whitefields, the Edwardses, are few. The mass of us are commonplace and

uninteresting. Some of us may possibly feel this sorely. Nobody cares for me! I am nobody. Why should I be so conceited as to hold that Christ knows me by name, or has any such interest as that would imply in me?

This idea may seem the more rashly venturesome, again, because Christ has been long gone from the earth which once he trod. He has passed back, we say, to where he was in the beginning with God; to that great height which no man approacheth unto, to that glory which is veiled from our eyes; into that infinitude which baffles all human thought. It is easy to think of him as retired from these small and close connections which bind you and me with one another. Indeed, thought in this direction tends, at first, to eliminate the idea of personality in God himself. So we fall readily into those trains of speculation, called scientific, according to which God himself is only another name for nature, matter or force. But what cares gravitation for individuals? Does heat have any respect for persons? Would lightning distinguish Mary Magdalene from any other woman? Nay, does Force know woman or man as such? Rather we perceive that these great physical energies play right on, whoever or whatever comes in their way, asking no questions, dis-

criminating no names, regardless of consequences. A being so highly exalted or rather so indefinitely removed, it is not hard to imagine indifferent to the weal or woe of any particular person. "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him and the son of man that thou visitest him?" That question never grows less to the reflective mind. The more frequently it is asked, the more wonderful does it seem that there should be one made higher than the heavens, through whom the heavens themselves were made, who can call the children of men by their names, who does recognize each one of us, even though we be small and obscure, from every other.

Precisely because this conception is marvellous and has its difficulties, because the ordinary sinful man does not keep it in his faith, was the fact revealed to us. It was revealed clearly, pointedly and with rare beauty. The identical conception now before us was repeatedly affirmed. Thus, Jehovah said to Moses, "thou hast found grace in my sight and I know thee by name." Our Lord also compares himself to the good shepherd, who calleth his own sheep by name. That we might not be left to think of such assurances as

applicable to a few select people, he has left on record the statement, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my brother and sister and mother," and the prayer also, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." In the messages to the seven churches, it is declared of them that shall overcome, that they shall have, each one of them, a white stone and in the stone a new name written. As the first man showed one chief characteristic in giving names to the animals in the garden where he was placed, so our Lord exhibits his divine humanity in giving names to his people. It has been, you know, a very general custom when men have become sons of God by the new birth, for them to assume some new name. So, in the days of the elder covenant, it was said, "Thou shalt no more be called Abram, but Abraham thou shalt be called." "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel." Simon, likewise, became Peter, and is better known by the latter than by the former appellation. Saul, of Tarsus, became the St. Paul of the Christian church. In our own day, not to mention other examples, when the Jew, David Mendel, espoused Christ, he took the suggestive and beloved name, Neander. Indeed, what is this very phrase, the

Christian name, but an indication of the fact that when anyone is baptized into Christ, christened, he takes a name, his own individual designation by which Christ, as well as his intimate friends, know him? We all very well understand, too, that by as much as we come to know each other intimately and affectionately, we incline to use the Christian name. Is it not something other than a fancy to suppose that our Lord prefers to think of us under this, the more familiar word, by which father, mother, husband, wife, brother and sister call us? For it has been happily remarked concerning the verse following our text, in which Mary is commissioned, "Go tell my brethren," he was not ashamed to call them brethren. Though he is ascending, yet it is, as he said, to my Father and your Father. He does not, however high his ascent, rise out of the heavenly family, or above the quick recognition that obtains in that household.

Grant that there are difficulties in the way of keeping this Biblical conception in the intellect. But the difficulties arise, after all, more from the narrowness than from any largeness in our thought. We are so weak that we cannot hold millions of individuals separately in our consciousness. We forget. We are selfish, too, and do not look on the things of others. We are Pharisees or Levites, and

cannot recognize the neighbor. We are affected by the sentiments of our set and society, and do not condescend to notice those with whom we once were familiar. But none of these defects limit our Lord. His love is wide and full.

“For the love of God is broader
Than the measure of man’s mind.”

He is not obliged to think in whole numbers from inability to hold fractional parts. He does not have to speak of classes, because he can not keep in recollection the individuals which make up the class. He fainteth not, neither is weary with any of the vast company for whom he liveth to make intercession. They are graven upon the palms of his hands,

Nor, on more searching thought, should the contemplation of his greatness, or the greatness of the universe, burden our faith. For his greatness is not only telescopic, but microscopic as well. Were we but the ultimate atoms of which it pleases our science to build the worlds, we were not beneath his notice. They are all numbered and weighed, as chemistry itself testifies. But we are of more value than many atoms. The most obscure man is not unworthy the recognition of him who died to save him. After we have put our

highest estimation upon sun and moon and stars, and have learned the latest marvels of nature, we have not found anything so remarkable as the soul of man. The mind which reads the universe is more richly endowed than the universe. Therefore the Bible, which abounds in vivid descriptions of the glory of the visible world, nevertheless does not hesitate to represent man as cared for by the Creator. What can surpass the pictures in the 40th of Isaiah? "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?" "He sitteth upon the circle of the earth and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in; he hath created these things on high; he bringeth out their host by numbers; he calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth." Yet right in the presence of this magnificent conception of the Creator and the Creation, the prophet says in words as sweet as any in human speech: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs in his arm and shall gently lead

them that are with young." No, if it be one result of some slight thinking as to the vastness of the universe, to wonder if its maker be mindful of the sons of men, that is only a partial, immature result; the final and ripe fruit is to confirm the conviction of the Psalmist: "I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh on me."

How admirably fitted such a conviction is to the actual feelings, to the very constitution of men, a very little reflection will persuade us. For if there be one thing which is a marked and universal characteristic of the human family, it is this; each one of us is an individual. We are not just "he" or "she," "him" or "her." We are more than common nouns, man or woman, boy or girl. The observant parent is amazed at the differences he notices in his own household. The children have been born within the same home, subjected to the same influences, but no one of them is the copy of any others. Strangers may remark their likeness; the parent remarks their unlikeness. People who meet them casually on the streets mistake one for the other. But the mistake is never agreeable to the children. You may even say, Why, these twin girls are as much alike as two peas. But treat them, as if it were of no consequence, which was which, and you will

speedily find that each one guards and prizes her individuality. She does not at all like to have herself merged in the self of any other person.

Of course, we have so many things in common, that we may be subjected to a common dealing and discipline. You shall gather, as in the city schools, several hundred youths together and classify them by grades. Each in the same grade shall have the same task, same rules, same rewards and punishments. You may go farther; you may know each scholar by his number, 1, 2, 3, 4. You may ignore what is peculiar in each one's mind, heart and history. In large establishments, this seems to be, to a great extent, necessary. Indeed, it may even be claimed to be desirable. But no scholar can be perfectly satisfied so. He will long sometimes to be treated according to his own special nature. The perfect teacher, too, is the one who finds out his pupil's individuality, and educates that as well as the qualities and capacities which all have in common.

This recognition by name—how pleasant it is! I remember walking once in a crowded railway station in company with a friend, several years after we had been together at Phillips Academy. My friend had spent, however, but a single term, and that in a subordinate department of that

school. The principal, happening just then to pass by, stepped up at once to his former pupil, calling him readily by his name. It was unexpected. It was very grateful. The glow of gratified feeling passed quickly into my friend's face. It is very pleasant to be remembered, to know that some one has thought enough of us not to lose our name. I observe that even the Chinamen among us have a natural resentment on being called John. That is not a bad name; it was that of the disciple whom Jesus loved. But they much prefer to be called Gam or Gee, or Hung or Wong.

Now, the Biblical doctrine of our Lord's interest in each of his disciples harmonizes, fully and delightfully, with this strong and marked sense of individuality. Mary's eyes may be so veiled that she does not recognize him; she may mistake his voice for that of the gardener; but he discriminates her from all other women; he distinguishes her from the three or four other Marys who ministered to him. How, indeed, could we think rightly or honorably of our Lord's perfection, if we supposed him to blunder, as so many of us do, in identifying those who belong to his kingdom. For that was not a mere witticism which one uttered regarding those who discuss so much the

question, whether Christians will recognize each other in heaven. He said it was a question much nearer home, whether they recognized each other on the earth. Surely we will not impute our ways to our Lord.

The thought, now presented, will come with special restfulness at certain times. Ordinarily, when we hear our names called, even if called by those whom we esteem and love, it gives no special thrill. Jesus had called Mary before, doubtless, when the word was only a passing utterance and left no impression. But to hear it now and here was ecstasy. So, when far from home, among strangers, in a foreign land, in solitude, sickness or danger, to be accosted by our own name might bring a wonderful joy. But we are all likely to be put in circumstances, in which we shall crave recognition. The world will go against us; friends leave us; temptation assail us; disappointment and loss set in upon us; doubt harass our steps; we may be ready to exclaim no man careth for us. Then, if we can bring back this admirable faith, the place where we would fain weep shall be filled with the presence and comfort of the risen Lord.

One path, at least, which we must all pass, is notably illuminated with this truth. We must

be borne hence to the sepulchre. This fact, when we allow it fairly to come into our mind, puts us apart by ourselves. For the path through the valley of the shadow of death is solitary. We must enter and pass through it alone. In this new experience, shall we be unnamed? The graves around us will multiply; but they will be silent. The cities of the dead will grow populous. What shall we be among so many? But by the grave's side, in the populous region beyond the grave, stands he, who said to the Magdalene, Mary; there will be individuality and recognition there.

Let us, then, my friends, do our work, whether it be great or small, public or obscure, under the persuasion that, whatever it is, it will be noticed as ours by our Lord. The Marys are very numerous, but they are not confounded with one another. One Mary may get credit in men's esteem for what another Mary has actually done. The two records are not jumbled in the mind of the Master. We should not, then, grow careless, thinking that if we do not do our work well, it will be undistinguished; that it will only go to make up the mass. This is not the Christian conception; it is not the truth. What you and I shall do will be known as your and my work.

The two mites will be counted to the poor woman every time.

And let me say, also, that that is the turning point in the life of any of us, when we feel that the Master calls us, our own very self, by name. It might startle my audience if I should mention the name of some one here and say, I came to preach to you. In large, crowded assemblies, you have heard some one cry out: Is such a person—uttering aloud the full name—Is such a person in the house? Here is a telegram for her. How that person arouses herself! How quickly thoughts, hopes and fears swell in her heart! So it is when we are made aware that we, our own self, are directly addressed by some divine message. Thus was it with the young man on the road to Damascus, when he heard the voice, Saul, Saul. The message came to his address and he must respond to it in person. Here is the prime trouble with many of us in the hearing of the Word. We do not take it as if it were meant for our individual self. Whenever we do take it so, the Gospel becomes a very different matter. We see a great many letters in the postman's hands as he passes our door. The one which is written with our name is the one which has meaning and power for us. Is there no one here this morning, who

will be startled because it seems to her that in the worship and lesson of this hour she hears her own name? Is there no one who will be prompted, as never before, to respond, Rabboni, Master?



XIII.

DISCIPLES IN A CONTRARY WIND.

“And when even was come, the boat was in the midst of the sea and he alone on the land. And he saw them distressed in rowing, for the wind was contrary to them.”—MARK 6: 47, 48.

IT was not an uncommon occurrence for boats crossing Lake Tiberias to encounter a contrary wind. Other boats may have been caught in the same way on this same evening. The reason why our attention is called to this particular boat is the fact that some disciples of Christ were in it. How will these men behave themselves in a storm? We are told in the narrative that their Master, who was on the land, saw them distressed in rowing. Was he thinking whether his teaching and miracles and friendship would make any difference with them in this hour of trial and danger? The darkness and the tossing sea would make the same impression upon their senses that the darkness and tossing sea make upon other fishermen. Why should he, or we, be

thinking that these men would conduct themselves in any superior spirit ?

Well, it may fitly be remembered that, only a few hours before, these disciples had seen a most astonishing miracle. In their own hands, as they passed through orderly companies of at least five thousand people, five loaves and two fishes had multiplied so as to satisfy this large number of hungry people. They had witnessed at least a dozen other miracles hardly less extraordinary. On this very sea, when the waves were as violent as now, they had beheld their Master rise out of a quiet sleep and hush the sea into a great calm. Besides, he had assured them that they were of more value to the Ruler of the world than many sparrows. He had taught them to pray to the Heavenly Father with a filial spirit, in simple, direct tones, without any doubt that their petitions would be heard. He had invited them to become, in a special sense, members of the Kingdom of God. A band of men, thus favored, enlightened and befriended by so remarkable a teacher, might be expected to show qualities of character superior to those exhibited by the average fishermen, who went to and fro on the same lake.

We may then inquire, also, if, in the various

distressing, trying, perplexing and annoying circumstances of earthly lot, there are not certain graces of spirit which may be expected of Christians because they are Christians. The Christian is not distinguished from other men by not having trouble, but by a certain ability to bear trouble or to get good out of it. The winds do not become propitious immediately he puts to sea, they may be very, sometimes, it might almost appear, exceptionally contrary, but in the fury of the elements he may have, in a marked degree, strength and cheer.

Thus there belongs to the disciple of Christ, patience. Patience is the ability and disposition to bear or endure, without giving way or breaking down. Other men than Christians have this quality. They bow to the inevitable. They do not fret or complain. They do not beat their head against the walls which imprison them. Nor do they wring their hands, nor mutter, nor wail. They are not foolish enough to kick the stone over which they have stumbled. But Christian patience is higher and sweeter. For it is inspired not by any doctrine of necessity or fate or mere law, but by faith in the Fatherly Providence, of which our Lord has so many and so beautiful words to say—words which are like the

lilies of the field. This wind is very contrary, but it blows in the world where one who loves me bears sway. I acquiesce, yea, in some real sense, I am content in the state to which I am brought. Dorothea Trudel's mother was severely tried. The family was poor, and the shiftless father wasted what substance the family had. Even a clergyman is said to have remonstrated with the daughter because the abused household did not have the father brought before the courts. Mother never complains, replied Dorothy, and so we have no right to do so. She says that nothing happens in this world except by God's permission, and that we are to look upon our sorrows as God's will, of which father is but the instrument. Whether this mother judged rightly as to what course it was best to pursue in her difficulty, is not for us to judge. But this one thing was sweet and strong and wise, her patience. This is admirable always. The heart says: this lot is plainly assigned me; I will stand in it; these are the conditions in which I am appointed to labor; they are not to my liking, but they are, so far as I can see, the will of God, and I will do my best in them.

Closely related to the grace just named is humility. Why should this storm be breaking

on us? That is the way in which it is very common to greet any adversity. What have I done to be so punished? Others are having smooth seas; why are mine so disturbed? Some not as good as I are rolling in wealth. Why am I poor? But the Christian habit of thought is very different. That leads one to wonder rather at his freedom from evil than at his large proportion of it. For he knows that his ill-deserts are numerous. "He hath not dealt with us according to our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." Bad as our lot is, most of us may always remember that our lot is far more favorable than that of millions. Besides, the Christian recollects that he follows a Master, who had not where to lay his head, who voluntarily emptied himself of glory that he might share the humble conditions of the great majority of mankind. Therefore, the exhortation, "In lowness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves," springs up at once in the Christian thought. I know very well what a miserable, and even ridiculous thing humility is when it is put on, or when it is kept for show. "Uriah Heep" and the "Prisoner of the Vatican" are not exemplars of the true grace. But genuine, unaffected, almost uncon-

scious humility in time of trial is as beautiful a flower as grows.

Very natural, also, is the transition from lowliness to thankfulness. This might even be regarded the prime test of a Godly man in forlorn conditions. Does he fall to counting his favors or his ill-fortunes, can he turn his face to his heavenly Father and abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness ? For Christian piety begins with praise. The old hard life of insensibility has been broken up by the consciousness of God's love shed abroad in the heart. A new habit of mind is induced, that is to observe the good in things evil, to watch the indications which our life affords of the Divine kindness. It was a favorite saying of Mary Lyon, he who observes providences will have providences to observe. Most true is it that he whose mind is set on seeing the Divine Love, will find that love revealing itself in the very events which other minds call contrary and calamitous.

So will spring up, likewise, another grace, hopefulness. For it is an express teaching of the apostle Paul that tribulation worketh patience, and patience hope. He also declares without reserve that all things work together for good to them that love God. Dr. Howard Crosby once said :

"Many years ago I was in a wreck on the Atlantic. The night was dark and the captain held out no hope of our reaching land. My mother led me into the cabin and read to me the 107th Psalm. She said, "Howard, never fear; the God who wrote that psalm is with us in this cabin." This strong assurance that, whatever happens, it will be well with them who make God their trust, is of the very essence of true discipleship. It has passed into the very proverbs and common-places of piety. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." "It is always darkest just before the day." Or as the Jews have said, "When the tale of bricks is doubled, then Moses comes." Or, as the little boy in South Africa, watching the little stock of provisions rapidly diminishing, said, "When mother scrapes the bottom of the barrel, the Lord is near." Indeed, what is there so characteristic of true religion as this irrepressible confidence of ultimate good? How it speaks out in the prophets, "O, thou afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted; behold I will lay thy stones with fair colors and lay thy foundations with sapphires!" And even James, practical and matter of fact as he is, does not hesitate to say, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." For the temptations will only give the Lord an opportunity to do

some good which otherwise were impossible. If the wind were never contrary, the Master might never be seen walking on the sea.

This hopefulness inspires persistence in all worthy endeavor. However distressed we may be in rowing, we are encouraged to keep on rowing. It is of the nature of Christian faith to laugh at impossibilities. Whatever the apparent difficulty may be, yet the disciple of Christ knows that his labor or endurance can not be in vain in such a Lord. Even if things come to the worst, and he is obliged to sorrow over what seem to be the failure and loss of his life, yet he does not "sorrow as others which have no hope."

Still another grace, which shines eminently in a Christian who has passed into difficult conditions, is conscientiousness. Almost always, when men are brought into straits, there is, or seems to be, a way of relief, if one will only break his word, or resort to a little deception, or take counsel of his passion or his pride. And men so overtaken will easily excuse themselves for dropping down from what in other circumstances would be regarded as the right standard. We read continually, to be sure, of people having the Christian profession, who when hard pressed by misfortune, or to avert failure, have not proven faithful, but the contrary.

Such instances are spread far and wide. But we are not told, we shall never be told here, how many men there are who have sworn to their own hurt and changed not, whose Christian principle has stood firm, just in those extremities in which that principle was most severely tried. It is a crowning grace to go through a season of perplexity and not say or do anything which violates truth or righteousness. The story of Joseph has an unceasing charm, because it reveals this trait of conscientiousness in a Hebrew boy far from home and ancestral restraints and sorely tempted, but he cannot sin against God. The story of Daniel has hardly less, perhaps in some respects a still greater charm, for it exhibits another Hebrew youth who in similar emergencies holds on his way, loyal to his convictions.

But I mention a specially superior grace which shines in troublous experiences, it is kindness of spirit toward our fellow-men. When things are going badly with us, we are very apt to cast about for somebody whom we can accuse or blame. Not a few of our embarrassments are owing to the conduct of our neighbors. It seems to give a special bitterness to some unfortunate persons that they can ascribe their difficulties to members of the church. That so many people should owe their reverses to

this source is both a great compliment and a great reproach to the church. It is a great compliment, because if integrity were not expected of Christian profession, no such amount of trust would ever have been reposed in professed disciples. It is a great reproach, because even the suspicion of want of honesty in those who bear the holiest name that is named, undermines the foundations of society. If anyone thinks his ill-fortune is owing to such false conduct, he is very prone to feel bitter and sour. If he be reasoned with and asked, Do you well to give way to such feeling, he is apt to reply with some indignation, Yes, I do well; such people deserve all the reproach I give them. If we are only gentiles, publicans and sinners, our fellow-gentiles and publicans will doubtless keep us in countenance in our-severe judgments. But if we are Christians, then unless the Gospel law is just what we may please to make it, the great grace of charity must come in and clarify and sweeten the feelings we cherish toward those who, we suppose, have injured us. You may tell me, all this is fine to preach, but that when one is actually suffering from the acts of others it is not easy to exercise this charity. I answer, I am not speaking as if it were as easy to manage our boat in a contrary wind, but of how

great a grace it is to be able to manage it when the wind is contrary. It was not as easy for Grace Darling to rescue a drowning boat's-crew, when the waves ran high, as to rescue a man in calm water, but the triumph was much greater in the one case than in the other. Any of us can manage to love those who love us, when all things go smooth ; but the test comes when we are asked, Have you kindly feelings toward those who do not love you, who are offensive to you, who have really injured you ?

It is a delightful memory of John, of Constantinople, so eloquent as to be better known as Chrysostom, the "Golden Mouth," that from the extremity of his forlorn and unjust exile, stripped of his honors, treated with shame and contempt, exposed to a harsh climate and in constant danger, he sent out his heart benevolently toward distant strangers, and offered to be reconciled to the bishop who had procured his condemnation, and when that bishop spurned his friendly overtures, Chrysostom still urged his friends to uphold the ministrations of his enemy. Those of us who remember how selfish the general current of life is among passengers at sea, must recall with admiration the story of Paul, the prisoner, how nobly thoughtful he was for all who were on

board the wrecked vessel. That certainly is a blessed grace, which is attained, when one who is in the midst of the sea and distressed with rowing, remains benevolent in temper, unsoured, kindly, whatever be the provocations which tempt and annoy.

These, then, are some prominent graces which may be expected to characterize a Christian disciple, when things go against him—patience, humility, gratitude, hope, conscientiousness and real kindness of spirit. Associated with all these, lying under them, is that general habit of soul called in the Scriptures, peace, “the peace which passeth understanding.” We often wonder at the physical strength which is given to some frail mother, during weeks of constant watching with the sick in her home. Every day would seem to be the last. At any hour we marvel that she does not give out. Strength is given her, we say. A similar, but an inexhaustible strength is given to not a few whose life’s boat is in the midst of the sea. It comes of great trust. It comes of considering, as the disciples are said not to have done, the miracle of the loaves. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon thee; because he trusteth in thee. My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth

give I unto you." This is the promise of one who came down from the mountain of prayer and walked the angry sea, and on whose coming into the tossing boat, the wind ceased.

Very well, I know that the Christian disciples, who do not show these distinguishing qualities, when they are sick or bereaved, or beset by provocation and reverses, are somewhat numerous. Instances may be cited in which some who do not claim to have Christian faith, have comported themselves better than the saints. I recall the tone and look of a woman, who would call herself a worldling, as, referring to the behavior of some people in the severe earthquake of 1868, she remarked, "I should think Christians would have more good sense and not be so weak and fearful as other folks." We learn, however, that faith does not furnish stronger nerves or make the feebler temperament, or will, or intellect equal to the stronger. But it imparts to the weaker, as well as to the stronger, some qualities which neither could have possessed without it. We are to remember, too, that Christian faith is a growth. Many of us who bear the name, disciples, are only children yet, and we have not full possession of our privileges in Christ. These men on Lake Tiberias had not yet mani-

fested any marked superiority to their fellows. Peter, walking on the water to go to Jesus, went down, as many a baby before him has gone down, when adventuring to walk. The disciples had just faith enough to stay in the Master's school. Remaining in that school, moral superiority came at last to those fishermen's lives. The time came, when they could walk the sea of martyrdom and not quail. Some of the young Christians, who are before me now, may not be always as strong as they should be. But, if they are really in Christ's training, they may yet surprise us by the grace with which they shall meet the difficulties of approaching years.

It must be plain that our witness for our Lord will depend very much on the degree in which we shall bear the very trials which we ourselves meet. It is no marvel to see men and women calm, good-tempered, cheery, joyous, when they have good health, and most other things to their mind. But are there such things as peace, patience, charity, integrity, when outward fortunes are unpropitious, our plans are disappointed and the hopes we cherished are laid in the dust ? Paul said, "For I have learned in whatsoever state I am therein to be content ;" that is, he had stored up within him spiritual riches on which he

could draw, whatever happened in temporal experiences. The hours of study in the life of a scholar have been called by a recent writer, his "camel hours, when he drank himself full so that he could oft refresh himself with a draught in the dry desert." Cool springs and rejoicing streams are many in the mountains, but he who can make them flow on the arid plains and in the midst of alkaline wastes is the great benefactor.

With us all, the winds are more or less contrary. Even the little children have times, when the billows go over them. Boys and girls do not succeed in ruling their own spirits. Older people are often distressed with rowing. Some of us, who have not to speak of very angry seas, go down, it may be, every day before some annoyance which frets and masters us. We need to lay hold of the strength which is given us in Christ. The seas will continue boisterous. They may become to individuals more furious than we have ever seen them. When I think of what has happened in the family histories of this congregation, during the last few years, I must conclude that we can not expect the seas will be made smooth for us on all our future journeys. The Master, on the evening referred to in our text, did not go away and pray that there might be no

storm, but that his disciples might learn something by means of the storm. His prayer on the night of his betrayal, too, was not that his disciples might be taken out of the world, but that they might be kept from the evil.

We are apt to say, Oh, if I were in such and such circumstances, were well instead of sick, had fewer cares and burdens, if other people would behave better, if we were not cheated and thwarted, if husband were more attentive, wife more appreciative, children more obedient, neighbors more sociable, church more alive, why, then I should be as sweet and good as any saint. Doubtless these things have their influence; doubtless some conditions are more helpful than others; doubtless the Master sympathizes with what is the peculiar disability with which any one of us has to struggle, but let us never forget that it is the boast and has been the triumph of our faith, that Christ enables those who give themselves into his keeping to walk the tossing sea as serenely as other men walk the land; that in our labor and under our heavenly burdens he will give us rest.

XIV.

THE IRREPRESSIBLE TRUTH.

“And Elijah, the Tishbite, who was of the sojourners of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord, the God of Israel, liveth !”

—1 Kings, 17:1.

THE very name of Elijah, this characteristic oath of his, and his impressive individuality, suggest and illustrate the point to which I immediately invite your attention. Let that point be, The truth of the living God irrepressible. The name, Elijah, means, My God is Jehovah. He is represented as using the solemn affirmation in the text on two grave occasions. The same affirmation was transmitted by him to his successor, Elisha. Again and again, by the vivid movement of his personal life and manner and character, he stamped upon his age, and, indeed, upon all ages, the truth that God is a living power in the world.

Those of us, who look back so many years, recall the aptness and force of that expression used by Wm. H. Seward, when he said concerning

the issue, then making, between free and slave labor on American soil, the conflict is irrepressible. The expression became a watch-word and a prophecy. The nation felt in all its fibre that there was something in the very constitution of man, which made it impossible to suppress that conflict. So, there is something in the very nature of the soul, which makes it certain that the truth of the living God will assert itself; it will break forth as certainly as the electricity that is in the air will flash and flash again along the sky.

See how this point lies in the accompanying narrative. Ahab had been doing all he could to make it appear that the distinctive faith of Israel was effete. The six kings who had preceded Ahab had thrown their example the same way. For seventy-five years, all the influence of the Court had tended to unbelief. The apostasy seems successful. Baal has supplanted Jehovah. The groves are thick with the priests of Astarte. But all at once, a clap in a clear sky, Elijah appears, unheralded, without ceremony, from the mountains of Gilead, from some obscure place there; his clothes are not cut after the reigning fashion. He announces in the name of Jehovah, a judgment on the faithless land. The long drouth that follows burns deep

into the dust the conviction of a living Lord. On Carmel, that conviction gets spontaneous and well nigh universal utterance. The four hundred and fifty prophets could not cry it down. It asserted itself in fury. But then followed a sudden reaction in the popular mind and Elijah fled for his life. It might seem that the late revival was only a transitory excitement. Ahab's fears were allayed. Jezebel rises and does her worst. Naboth's rights are of no account. He is stoned to death and there is no avenger. Has not truth fallen flat in the streets? The King has gone down to take possession of the dead man's land. Dead men tell no tales. No divine ear hears them if they are told. What a fine garden of herbs this will be! But again walks, unbidden as before, this same Tishbite with the ominous name, and with his divine and stinging message. How did he get there? Whence does he come? Who told him where to find the king? How is it that the monarch sits down in sack-cloth and goes humbly? These vivid scenes are illustrations of our thought. The soul is so made, and the world is such in its very constitution, that the living God is an irrepressible truth. It will not forever down at the bidding of any prince or under the power of any fashion.

This point comes to sight in the history of human speculation. Ever since men began to think, some have endeavored to explain the facts of the world without the idea of a personal living governor. A vast amount of ingenuity has been expended on the explanations. But the trouble is, the world will not stay explained. It bursts the theories which have been manufactured for it. It is too large for them. There are more things by a great many in heaven and earth than can be accommodated within any of these explanations. When we hear, for example, so much said of evolution, the inference might keep coming into the mind, if the earth and the stars and man himself have come to be what they are, little by little, by slight variations occurring and continuing for millions of ages, why then, where is the Lord of Elijah and of the Christian faith ? Is not the notion of a Creator needless ? Do not matter and law account for everything ? But we have only to ask for the origin of matter and inquire, how comes there to be order and progress in the world at all, and the thought of the Divine agency is back again in all its force. God, who had apparently been receding step by step into an infinite distance, till he was about to be lost as an object of love and trust, suddenly re-appears



all along the lines by which he had receded. Nothing is more curious to the student of opinion than this. Again and again, he sees this done over and over. Some novel explanation will be broached. It will fill all the air. Some religious men will distrust it and begin to controvert it. They will dread or deride it. Other over sanguine advocates will draw or insinuate atheistic inferences. The cry will be raised on the one hand, religion has now got its fatal blow. The cry will be raised on the other side, the foundations are destroyed, and what will the righteous do? But before long, it will be found that the new explanation is either unverified; or, if verified, is only more, not less, religious, than the old. For all thinking, and all objects of thought, presuppose the thinker. Matter itself is saturated with mind. The fact of the Divine presence is irrepressible. It is like the light; when you have done your best to exclude it, it will come shining in just as if it had never been shut out.

The point before us is illustrated by the changes which take place in the experience of human lives. The psalmist says: "My heart and my flesh crieth out for God, for the living God." It is not uncommon for men who have been remarkably destitute of religious feeling, who have been positively

unbelieving, to show, of a sudden, a surprising and permanent devotion. Seldom does this take place by a process of argument, at least not by a process of formal argument. It comes about by some experience which opens to the man new depths of his own nature and new needs. The writer of the book of Ecclesiastes represents himself as full of doubts and problems unsolved. He seeks for a solution in wealth, in pleasure, in wisdom. It is because his heart finds deeper wants than these satisfy, that he finally rests in the conclusion of the whole matter, that is, in God and obedience to him. It was so with Augustine. He tried sensual delights, rhetorical fame, philosophy, but these gave him no rest. The void of his nature grew larger and more painful till at last it was filled by the Son of God. Nothing else was large enough to fill it. Now, human beings are all the time subject to this deepened knowledge of themselves. The child will not remain a child. Play will not always be his chief element. He will not always be content with a drum and a kite. "The heavy and weary weight of all this unintelligible world," will some day sink into his feeling. And then what? Why, my heart and my flesh cry out for God, for the living God. That is a striking description which Dr. John Brown gives of his

father. On the death of his wife, "he went home and preached her funeral sermon--outwardly unmoved—but from that time dates an entire, though always deepening alteration in his preaching, because an entire change in his way of dealing with God's word—he got a new adamantine point to the instrument with which he bored, and with a fresh power, with his whole might, he sunk it right down to the living rock, to the virgin gold." This was the effect of heartfelt sorrow upon a mind already devout. It intensified devotion. It made the eye see the land which is very far off. It made that land real and solemn. Similar experiences have changed again and again the aspect of divine things in minds which before had been careless or even unbelieving. Did not the loss of his idolized wife very strongly influence to a more religious mood the later philosophical thought of such a critic as John S. Mill? And was it not in the new experience induced by the wound which left the ambitious soldier a cripple, that Ignatius Loyola turned his thoughts toward the invisible world? But it is not mere loss or bereavement which gives the religious impulse. Any change in our feelings which brings the sense of dependence, of responsibility, which awakens conscience or benevolent sympathy,

must tend to open the heart to the great fact of God. The boy has come to the period when he must choose his course of life; or he has begun to feel the fascination and power of temptations which he is not strong enough to overcome. The gay young maiden enters upon the mysterious joy of motherhood. Life takes on a larger and more serious significance. That was a marked discourse which Dr. Bushnell once preached from the text, "Moab hath been at ease from his youth and he hath settled on his lees and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity; therefore his taste remained in him and his scent is not changed." But Moab's time came, and he was emptied from vessel to vessel. And our time comes; we see that life's changes are strange, and we inquire more and more what God means by them; we are led to see that they mean God. If we have not before felt any special need of religion, we may now long after God, as in a dry and thirsty land where no water is. I feel sure that one reason why so many young men of our day treat religious doctrine so lightly is because they are in a superficial stage of feeling, are conceited; or occupied with external appearances of life; spend so much of their time in the shows of things; have not begun to think

deeply ; have not brought themselves face to face with the law of duty. But that stage cannot always remain with many of them. They must pass it. The great truth which has belonged to humanity for all time, of a living God, belongs in their natures. A Pagan poet said, "Expel nature with a fork, and it will return again." Let the superficial mind reason away the conviction of one Divine presence, it will come back to him. If one is to pass into even the average experience of human souls, he will sometime pass into depths which will suggest the utterance of the man who lay down at Bethel, "Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not."

Again, the point before us is illustrated by the fact that great religious movements and teachers are sure, sooner or later, to confront even thoughtless souls with the fact of the living God. Elijah himself was a wonderful institution for keeping the sense of God alive in the nation of Israel. So were all the prophets. They kept going hither and thither with holy messages on their lips. They were inwardly constrained to carry these messages. When Jeremiah went about among his people, he met with derision, so that he said to himself, "I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name." But he could not

help himself. For he says, "But his word was in my heart, as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." So you know it was with Peter and John, when they were told by the council not to speak any more in the name of Jesus. "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Similar is the affirmation of St. Paul, "Woe to me if I preach not the Gospel." Some power says to all such men, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work I have given them to do." Once that feeling comes into a man's breast and he is bound to speak. If he should hold his peace, the stones would cry out. If the great mass of any community become indifferent and begin to talk as if these religious ideas were displaced by the progress of the age, then some Bernard, or Luther, or Calvin, or Wesley, or Moody will pass that way and startle the dull ear of society with the cry, *As the Lord God of Israel liveth!* This irrepressible cry is by no means agreeable. Indeed, it seems very ill-timed and out of place to many. Have not our philosophies and sciences proven that the day of such beliefs has passed? If so, your philosophies and sciences will need to be revised. For God lives in the heart of humanity, and if at any time any considerable portion is seeking

how it may not recognize him, then he will speak out only with a sharper and more ringing emphasis by the mouth of some Elijah.

The point, now illustrated in this threefold way, is one of strength and encouragement to all Christian workers. There are times when the boldest of good men faint in their feelings. The evils become so portentous. The contagion of error is so sweeping. The moral inertia is so great. The zeal and activity of even them who are good are so inadequate to the issues. So it was with Elijah under the juniper tree, weary, disappointed, spent, the grim desert before him and the mad world behind him, no wonder it seemed to him that he had fallen on hopeless days. But the lesson was soon taught him, that if God be not present in one form of working, he is in some other. If not in the earthquake and not in the fire, yet in the still, small voice. It is related of that Luther, whose single voice once compelled the European world to listen, that on one occasion in later years, when everything seemed to be going wrong, when his plans were thwarted and his spirit wounded in the house of his friends, that his wife, Catharine, appeared in mourning. What has happened? asked her good spouse. God is dead, was the reply. How absurd! and Luther rallied at the

very idea. His wife's humorous turn cleared his skies. For had he not always said and had he not sung,

"A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing."

Had not he shared the conviction which took familiar shape in the well-known German tradition concerning Frederick Barbarossa ? That emperor, says the myth, though he died in the far East, in the crusades, is not dead, but only sleeping, till the bad world reach its worst, when he will re-appear. He sits within the hill near Salzburg. A peasant once stumbling into the interior there, saw the emperor in his stone cavern. He sat at a marble table, leaning on his elbow, winking, only half asleep, his beard had grown through the table and streamed on the floor. He looked at the peasant, and asked the time of day. "Not quite time yet, will be soon !" This is only a legendary way of rendering the irrepressible conviction, which belongs to humanity, of a coming Messiah. No grave, though it be the bed of a river in the far East, can hold him fast. No Salzburg cavern can confine him. He ever liveth. The sons of the prophets may miss God's spirit in Elijah ; may search the mountains of Gilead three days and find him not ; but when they return they

shall see that the same spirit rests on Elisha. Centuries may go by and it may often seem as if there were a blank Bible. But Elijah will re-appear. John the Baptist will represent him. Herod may kill John, but even Herod's conscience when it hears of the works of Jesus, will say, it is John; he is risen from the dead. The disciples of Christ may go sorrowing, because Jesus is crucified, but before they are aware, he shall stand in the midst of them and say, Peace be unto you.

The idea that the power of Christian teaching is past is industriously circulated in many influential circles. Not a few of a better class have discussed, indeed, what we shall do for morality and good order, what shall be substituted in its place. But such assumptions will be confounded just as certainly as they are indulged. For the commandment that read long ago, reads now, Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Philosophy itself, this restive human nature, and inspired men and women, will echo that command as long as the world stands. Our literature may be disdainful of Christian doctrine, our politicians may ignore the Christian Sabbath, the daily press may forget the claims of temperance, and, in consequence, many voices may speak as if the day of the

church were gone, but if the stones do not speak out, we may be sure the women will.

Let it be remembered, too, by us all, that if this truth be irrepressible, we must, every one of us, adjust ourselves to it. The story is told of a man in the interior of our country, who kept moving off farther and farther into the wilderness, for he did not want to hear of God again. But religion would keep coming and settling in his neighborhood. He would then move off. But, as was long ago said, no refugee can escape from himself. So, this man could not escape the thought, which belonged to his nature, nor the inevitable passing his way of some messenger of God. He thought it best to come to terms with him and be at peace. That is best for us all. For nothing we can think and nothing that we can do, not even suicide, can annul the fact of the Divine presence in the universe and of our quick responsibility thereto. At a certain age, or in some inconsiderate mood, boys have been said to try to run away from their own shadow. But they soon found that the attempt is futile. Little children, pleased for a time, and then displeased, with their own image in a glass, have been known to break the glass. But the soul of man, which gives back the divine image, cannot be broken so that it will not

suggest the thought and fact of the living God. "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there ; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there." There is no use in shutting our ears and imagining that his voice is hushed ; of closing our eyes and dreaming that he is unknown. Let us acquaint ourselves with him. With this Being who is inseparably associated with the exercise of thought, with this Being in whom I live and move and have my being, let me be in a covenant, well ordered and sure. For then this fact of the Divine presence will lead me to say with the psalmist, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God ! How great is the sum of them ! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with thee." No longer is there any irrepressible conflict ; there is an irrepressible peace.

XV.

THE SEALED BOOK IN THE SAVIOUR'S HAND.

"And I saw in the midst of the throne . . . a lamb standing as though it had been slain. . . . And he came and he taketh it out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne."—REV. v:6, 7.

IN the chapter before this, John had represented himself as looking into the unseen world and beholding there, as the central object of vision, a throne and him that sat upon it. In this chapter his attention is arrested by the sealed book which the sovereign holds in his right hand ; and, soon after, his anxiety lest the book should remain sealed is relieved by the sight of the one being, who is able to open it. That being is described, in the striking language of the text, as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, standing as though it had been slain. When this wonderful personage took the closely sealed book, the entire company who surrounded the throne burst into an anthem of joyous praise.

The book we all understand to be that in which

was written in advance the events which were to occur in connection with the advancing kingdom of Christ upon the earth. It was an outline in vivid symbol of the coming history of mankind. No wonder that John had such a great desire to have this book opened. If I had in my hand, this morning, a document in which the fortunes of every person in this congregation were sketched for the next fifty years, even the fears for what it might contain of evil would hardly repress the curiosity with which many would desire to have it read. When we actually study, and try to make out in detail, what events were figured forth in the roll which John saw, we might feel that in many particulars the future was too dark and too sad ; we might almost prefer not to know the story beforehand. For as soon as the seals are broken we see that the coming scenes are not peaceful nor predominantly gladsome. To be sure, the first horse is white and means victory, but victory has its shadowed side ; the next horse is red and means war, bloody war ; the third is black, and means famine ; the fourth is pale and his name is death, and Hades followed with him. And when was opened the fifth seal, we hear the cry of martyred souls, of men slain for the word of God. The sixth seal reveals the scenes which come

with an earthquake. And when at last the seventh seal is broken, the half hour's silence is only a preparation for the no less awe-inspiring events which follow each other, as the seven angels sound their trumpets. According to the opened book, the future of the world was to be largely characterized by war, famine, death, martyrdom and great cosmic convulsions. No one who has read the history of the first and second centuries will hesitate to say that the prophesy was abundantly verified. Nor can the record of any succeeding centuries be read without bearing witness to the fidelity of the general description, here given, of what was to be. We are accustomed to regard our nineteenth century with complacency. And certainly there is much in it which calls for appreciation and for gratitude and for hope. Yet our modern civilization has very sombre sides. We who have lived but a few decades, have seen the red and the black and the pale horse come forth and trample the earth. While we sing the marvellous advances which have been made and are making, and compare the comforts and luxuries and increased intelligence of the present with the past, there are loud voices of discontent, and social perils confront us on every side. The optimist does not have it all his own way, for the pessimist

is abroad also ; and some soberest men feel sure that the morning of the second advent must be very near, because it is so very dark just now. No, there has never been any age in which our Lord's language would be out of place in the eyes of thoughtful and godly observers, "Upon the earth distress of nations, in perplexity for the roaring of the sea and the billows ; men fainting for fear and for expectation of the things which are coming on the world." The seals and trumpets and bowls which John saw in connection with the book, are only somewhat more vivid and particular unfoldings of the language of the Saviour. They are faithful picturings of the succession of stormy and troubled scenes which make up human history. No one who knows what the real story of mankind has been can look forward to the future generations without feeling the possibilities of evil. No one who has watched the tragedies that have been enacted during his own little life-time, can have altogether roseate anticipations concerning what is to occur in the experience which awaits himself, or those whom he holds dear. And if it were not for one thing, we might rather choose to have the book that lies in God's hand remain totally sealed.

That one thing is suggested by the vision in the text. For shall I strain a point, if I suggest

that the great reason why, notwithstanding all the possibilities of evil that lie before us, we can look forward to the future without weeping, is that the seals of the book are to be broken by the one who is described in the remarkable language of the text? The lamb who was slain is in the midst of the throne. The Saviour is to be intimately connected with the future which opens before his people. He who was slain in man's behalf is not a mere wise interpreter, like Daniel, who reads off what is written in the volume of destiny. The volume itself is different from what it would have been, if he had not entered into vital and saving relations with our human race. In other words, the various vicissitudes of every individual life, as well as of the humanity to which we belong, are to be determined not a little by the fact that this world's immediate ruler is a Saviour.

Consider, for a moment, that the representation in this chapter is not confined to this particular vision. The conception runs through the entire Revelation. Thus, the great multitude whom no man could number, white-robed and bearing palms, stood before the Lamb. It was the Lamb that was seen on Mount Zion with the hundred and forty-four thousand. If the river of the water of life proceeded from the throne, the throne is called that

of God and the Lamb. If the glory of God lights up the heavenly city, so also it is said, "the Lamb is the light thereof." If God is to wipe away all the tears of the Redeemed, the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, is to "feed them and lead them unto living fountains of water."

Consider, also, what an element of gentleness this figure adds to the conception of God, the Governor of the world. This Revelation of St. John contains the most lofty views of Divine holiness and sovereignty. He who sat upon the throne was to look upon like a jasper stone. Out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and voices, and thunders. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne. The vast world of created intelligences rested not, day and night, saying, holy, holy, holy. They cast their crowns and fell prostrate before the most High. This is precisely the conception of the Divine Being, which is specially disliked by a class of religious orators and essayists in our day. The thought of God as the holy Ruler of the universe, which was made so prominent in the early theology of the reformation and of our own country, is distasteful to many in our time. Nihilism and Anarchism are only the occasional explosion of that aversion to righteous authority which slumbers in all our

hearts. And if there were no conception of God given us in the Scripture, except that of holy and exacting Sovereignty, the sense of separation between us and God would become unendurable. We should do what those did in the succeeding vision, who said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us. But the throne, while it remains holy, draws nearer, and becomes wonderfully different to us, when we see in the midst of it the Lamb that was slain. If we looked at the fourth chapter alone, we might feel, as the story is of the hearer under Jonathan Edwards' preaching, who cried out, But, Mr. Edwards, is not God merciful? But the sight of the Lamb brings a gracious gentleness into our conception of the Divine Sovereign.

This figure also helps us in our reading of the actual course of Providence. For it sets us to considering how the divine gentleness mingles with the severer aspects of human life.

Thus we fall to thinking of the forbearance shown toward sinners. There is an immense amount of retribution in this world, but there is an immense amount of sin, which is not punished according to its deserts. The wrongs which are never righted, the crimes that are never proven, how full earth has been of them! The Irish are

not the only people among whom injustice on the one hand, and hatred on the other, goes on with no adequate condemnation. These are not the only days in which the poor man has been treated without consideration, and the men who did so prospered in consequence. Souls under the altar have cried, all down the ages, How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood ! Surely, there must be a Lamb in the midst of the throne, or there would not have been so much forbearance.

We fall to thinking, especially, of forbearance toward converted men. David said, in one of his psalms, "Thy gentleness hath made me great;" and he distressingly needed it on more than one occasion. So did several others of the Old Testament worthies. A French unbeliever has collected in a book the instances of bad conduct in the lives of patriarchs and kings, as an argument to the French people against the purity of the Old Testament. For would a righteous God have such men to represent his government on the earth ? And so down to our time. Men have come to membership in the Christian Church, who had and continue to have grave faults. Their brethren have hardly endured them, and the world outside has mocked or scorned them. And if

these men were what they professed to be, they have wondered more profoundly than these critics, that they should have been borne with so long. For what would any of us do, in our conscious faultiness, were it not that there is a Lamb in the midst of the throne ? I hear very severe things said about persons who, I believe, are genuine Christians. We get out of patience with each other on slight occasions. The conduct of this or that brother and sister becomes very offensive to us. Strifes among brethren rend little societies and churches, and even put into hostile camps the great bodies of Christendom. Christ is wounded in the home of his friends. How can they who do the wounding be tolerated, except there be an element of marvellous tenderness in the divine government of the church ? The scarlet thread is woven in the white garments of our sovereign. It must be so, else there could not be so delicate appreciation of imperfect faith, and so great care not to break the broken reed nor quench the smoking flax.

Is it not natural, also, under this figure, to fall to thinking of the attitude of the divine government toward the weak, the poor, the children of the human family? During those ages which are called by eminence the dark ages, it is said that the



church was the refuge of those who were hard pressed. One reason assigned for this was the fact that the clergy were often drawn from the depressed conditions of society. They had a tender feeling for the unprotected ranks from which themselves sprung. If the Shepherd of our Israel be likened to a lamb, it is not strange that in leading his flock, he should carry the lambs in his arms. Nothing is more characteristic of the Divine Kingdom than to have special consideration for the lowly and the immature. When the question was asked, have any of the rulers believed upon him, our Saviour was known as the friend of them that labored and were heavy laden ; the Messiah, not so much of the wise and prudent, as of the babes. A well-known New York journalist has lately said :

“During twenty odd years of eventful toil in the great city, I never found a depth of misery so deep, a poverty so rank, a crime so atrocious, a despair so black, that some humble follower of that Master did not find it out. Into all holes and corners of wretchedness, where vice and poverty, like twin wolves, had hunted down their prey, the policeman and reporter always found the hooded sister or the missionary ahead of them. They were the first to come. They were the last to go. They stayed and put up their supplications, when

all else on earth had forsaken the wretch. They followed him to the prison cell, and they stood beside him on the gallows, and they never forgot, in all the obloquy of sin and the cry of human vengeance, the eternal brotherhood of man. And they wanted no pay, and they got no praise. They are doing that Master's work. True it was eighteen hundred years ago, when he called them, and bade them go out and bind up the broken hearts and dry up the tears, and thus with tender touches of tone they carry out his mission."

The volume in which the fortunes of these weak and wretched ones were written, would not have been relieved of its hardship, had it not been that the lamb that was slain had touched some human hearts with an unspeakable yearning and sympathy.

And even as respects the hard lot itself of men, how often are we reminded of some marvellous mitigation and solace, which brings home to the sufferer at least the assurance that the governor of the world is its saviour. I do not conceal the fact that the way of Providence is often inexplicable. The book, when it is opened, is written, within and without, with dark pages. I have read whole chapters in the lives of men and women whom I have known, in which it was not easy to see anything but the relentless succession of merely

natural causes and effects. When the storm came, it drove right on; as if there were no hand that held or tempered the four winds. But in how many hundreds and thousands of cases, has there been a signal sweetness put in the cup which men have been called to drink! In the midst of war, and famine, and death, and martyrdom, always, we find souls that, though strangely tried, have felt as never before the sense of the divine friendship and kindness. Did we not bury, the other day, one who in his sorest extremity, marvelled at the peace and the comfort he found ministered unto him from some invisible source? The vision of John represents that, at the close of the sixth seal, the winds were holden till the one hundred and forty-four thousand were sealed. And when inquiry was made as to who this white-robed company were, it was answered, "These are they which came out of the great tribulation." That they came out with washed robes, was certainly because of the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne.

We have seen, then, that there is much in the way of the Divine Providence in the world which harmonizes with the remarkable symbol which was seen by the author of the Apocalypse. And certainly there is no conception of the creator

which is equal to this in beauty or comfort. We are familiar with the deity of mere uniform forces. But that does not satisfy the heart. We join, it may be, in saying, Holy, Holy, Holy. We feel at times that we are in the grasp of omnipotence. What are we, so insignificant and so sinful, in the immensity of the divine sway? There is one answer which relieves the soul from the strain which these high thoughts bring. This vast system of things is governed in the interest and held in the gracious keeping of the Saviour. What I need to know is, that I have welcomed the service which that advocate and mediator has undertaken on my account. That will not make the book of my life read like a fairy tale. That will not insure me against war, famine, or death. I may have, possibly, more than is common of those evils which often darken these human skies. But I may expect that the gentleness of the Lamb, as well as the strength of the Lion, will be exerted in my behalf. The ten horns and the seven eyes symbolize a power and a knowledge which will carry me through.

When I fall to thinking about the volume, now sealed so closely, which contains what will be the career of each member of this congregation, my thinking is not always as hopeful as could be

wished. What manner of child will this be? What will be the manhood of these boys, who come and go? What sort of citizens will these children of our homes and Sunday Schools become? What friendships, partnerships, marriages will they form? Will they have wealth, poverty, health, sickness? Will they live in happier or sadder days than these? It is hard to answer. But the most important question is, whether they are so disposed toward Christ, that we may reasonably expect that, whatever outward lot may be theirs, they will live as those who have a friend at the throne.

XVI.

THE JUDGMENT A SATISFACTION.

"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."—Eccl. 12:14.

THE doctrine of a final and full judgment of human life is a great and impressive doctrine. It is great and impressive, whichever way one views it. But the writer of this book views it in the light of a great satisfaction. To his wide-ranging and often baffled mind, the fact that God was to bring every work into judgment, promised a solution, some time, of the mysteries of the world. Let us look at this matter in the same light.

We may pass readily into this view, if we bethink ourselves that hardly any exercise is more common and irrepressible to us all than that of judgment. You have already caught yourselves in the act of it this very morning. If you have not pronounced your opinion concerning this and that person in the congregation, you have no doubt formed one in your thoughts. You have said to yourself, such a one is ill- or well-dressed; that boy or girl is

silly or sensible ; that Christian is genuine or otherwise ; the preacher, the teachers, the scholars, the singers, we shall have weighed them pretty well, or pretty ill, before the services of the day shall be over. All the week long this is going on. A large part of our social intercourse concerns our or other people's estimates of the person or conduct of the people we meet. Now-a-days, it is hard to find a jury, because every other man has made up his mind on the case, and what is the newspaper but a series of items and leaders reflecting on everybody ? Who is the interviewer but one who is trying to draw out from every notable individual who comes and goes, what that notable individual has to say concerning the doings of the men of the hour ? It was said of a certain ancient city, that the citizens and the strangers sojourning there "spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or hear some new thing." And we know that our modern cities suit the same description amazingly well. For here we are, a whole nation of us, ready for the news at least twice a day, and eager to make up a verdict on the conduct of a Harrison or a Gladstone, and even of the people whose names are crowded together in the interminable column of Society's gossip. We want to hear what is public opinion.

Some of us are quite in a hurry to express our own. You remember that when the woman of Samaria perceived that Jesus was prophet, she instantly asked him to decide whether her countrymen or the Jews were right on the disputed point, which mountain was the place for worship. Does not all this indicate that the idea of a judgment is a pleasure to the human mind ?

But especially does the fact of a divine judgment afford satisfaction, because there is so much poor, defective, false, yes, wicked verdict current in the world. That is a singular phenomenon, which is called color-blindness. It seems impossible that there should be people who do not know blue from red. If that were all, the case would not be so bad. For such persons might refrain from pronouncing on colors. Unhappily that is not always so. For how many are to be found, who though they are not competent to discern colors in character, are not at all reticent in descanting upon them ! They are superficial, unobserving, prejudiced, partisan, yet they declare themselves as if they were judicial experts. How ridiculous it is for many of us to express ourselves so freely on all sorts of subjects ! We smile sometimes when we read over the programs of school exercises, to see the mighty themes on

which the boys and girls make up their minds. Happily what they give us may not be the last word! For how narrow and inadequate would their decision be. But the fact that we are children of a larger growth does not prevent a like narrowness. You may overhear, any day, people uttering themselves with respect to some person of your acquaintance in a style which you know to be the veriest caricature. They throw off an outline sketch of your friend, which hardly suggests the real man at all. But the trouble is that these casual and absurd characterizations will affect his reputation and influence. They may affect it very seriously. Through him, they may bring disaster upon some great institution or cause with which he is connected. We recall to mind in this month of February the birth-days of two chief citizens in our Republic. Yet both Washington and Lincoln were in their time subject to stupid or slanderous or abusive misrepresentations, which not only injured the men themselves for the time, but imperiled the patriotic treasure which the nation had committed to their keeping. To a truth-loving mind what is so painful as to listen when conversation turns upon the career of a man who is running for a public office, or when you are compelled to search the files of a partisan

journal for information as to the claims of rival candidates ! And even when the mind is careful and candid, yet it is also grievously perplexed. It is so difficult to arrive at just estimates. What is the fair conclusion as to such a person as Lot, or Jacob, or David even, or Solomon ? How can we reconcile the opposing elements that entered into their life ? So, when our mind is bent on the utmost charity, we do not know how to settle the problems which human life presents. They are too intricate for us. Must it not be a satisfaction to think that, however defective and even outrageous, human decisions may be, there is a decision which is clear and just ?

The expectation of a coming divine judgment begets restfulness also, because the daily judgment of Providence is manifestly incomplete. No doubt the general course of the divine working in this world discovers and favors the good and exposes and condemns the evil. No doubt there is truth in the famous proposition, "The history of the world is its judgment." The injustice which is done in one generation may grow clearer when the next generation reads the record. The descendants of them who killed the prophets may build their monuments. The nineteenth century may reverse the verdict which was passed by the mob in the

mad hour when the Son of Man was crucified. But, manifestly, this historical court does not adjudicate a millionth part of the bad adjustments which have taken place in a single decade of time. Inequalities lie over in each generation, too numerous to be computed, and they must make appeal, if any is to be made, not to history, not to Gibbon, or Macaulay, or Bancroft, but to some tribunal higher than any which such as they administer. This is the way the author of the book of Ecclesiastes worked at the problem which human life presented in his day. He saw, he says, "under the sun, in the place of judgment, that wickedness was there"; he beheld "the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power, and they had no comforter"; he saw "all labor and every skillful work, that for this a man is envied of his neighbor"; he saw a man of industry and probity laying up good for the thriftless and the vile; he noted that things often went much the same, whether a man was wicked or righteous; he could not fail to observe the case of some poor wise man delivering a city, and no one remembering the poor wise man. These were grievous sights to our Hebrew philosopher. They baffled his understanding. Are they not the very sights which

perplex and task our social science now? Are not these the problems which make the socialist and the nihilist and anarchist propose to reconstruct the world on some basis of what they call natural justice? The ages increase, and our century has taken to itself all the experience of them who have gone before. But the great problems are not essentially different to-day from what they have always been. If what we see under the sun be all we are ever to see, then we might fall into the same strain with the author of our text and cry with him, "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity and a striving after the wind." But his mind gravitated, on the whole, toward one comprehensive truth, and in this he found the ultimate satisfaction—God shall bring every work into judgment.

The satisfaction to be found in this truth becomes even fuller in the Christian mind, because of the more definite and distinct apprehension which that mind has of the Judge. When we hear Abraham say, in his appeal to Jehovah, Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? we feel the strength and comfort which that old man, living in the midst of the idolatry of the nations, found in the very name of an absolutely righteous Ruler of the world. The principal thing the peoples of the old world wanted in their sovereign, was a judge. Leader-

ship was a grave, but glad responsibility, when Moses sat in his tent and heard the endless stories of trouble that were brought for his decision. Absalom tempted the loyalty of Israel by assuring them that he would settle their disputes in a better way than his father. Solomon won admiring approval because he was able to touch the quick of justice in deciding which of two claimants was the mother of the infant child. And in the prophecies of the Messiah, it was predicted that he "shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, but with righteousness shall he judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." Such a picture was ravishingly attractive to people who rarely enjoyed an upright judiciary. When the predicted king came, the picture was realized in all its beauty. What in some inspired and inspiring moment was seen as in a vision, was revealed as a visible reality, and men " beheld his glory "; they saw the living Son of God, and in him the ideal judge was perfectly fulfilled. He lived his few marvellous years in the sight of men, and then ascended into the heavens; and all this tangled web of our human probation is in his hands. If Abraham could confidently appeal to the Jehovah who had called him out of Haran, and so could be at rest, even though Sodom were destroyed, then

the Christian mind may find its rest in the thought that God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained. For the judgment seat of Christ insures that all will be right at last.

And we may deepen this satisfied feeling, by considering the delicate thoroughness with which such a judge must exercise his office. In many decisions, we may recognize the fact that no other result could be expected, and yet our minds are not easy. We have not got, we think, to the bottom facts. Something hidden has not come out in the evidence, or if it has come out, perhaps it has not had its due weight. The diamond and a piece of charcoal are both carbon, but there is some secret in the formation of the one which makes it incomparably valuable. So similar conduct in one man may be justified, and in another condemned, because of some hidden motive which underlies the conduct. One man may blush because he is guilty, while his neighbor blushes simply because he is suspected. Who shall rightly interpret the color that rises in the face? So much depends on considerations which are slight in their appearance in determining the real character of men, that it is a great comfort to read in our text that God will take account of "every

hidden thing." Dr. Willey in his interesting narrative of his pioneer voyage to California, tells us that owing to the wrong rating of the chronometer at New Orleans, the steamship was thirty miles off its intended course by the time it passed the point of Cuba. How much depends on slight divergencies! Shall our final judge have been sensitive to every little influence that has affected our moral condition? If so, then, no one shall have occasion to say: the verdict would be different, if such witnesses had been called; if certain things which might have been considered had had their proper force. All things will have been considered and have been assigned their just force in the great result.

One of the elements of satisfaction growing out of the fact of the Divine judgment is this: the really true and right-hearted, who were maligned or obscured or self-distrustful, or for any reason misconstrued, will come forth to recognition and honor, while those who wore a reputation which was not deserved will wear it no longer. This is the point which our Lord himself makes, when he represents the righteous as rewarded for ministering to himself, because they ministered to the least of his disciples. They did not know themselves what he discerned in them. He makes

the same disclosure, when he transfers Lazarus and not Dives to Abraham's bosom. Men have often lain under imputations which were precisely the opposite of their deserts. It is a rare and deep pleasure, after that has been going on for years, to have the real state of the case disclosed. So Mordecai rode forth—the man whom the King delighted to honor. I recall the satisfaction which Jee Gam, our Chinese helper, took in that story, in those days when he first began to take an interest in the Bible. His face brightened. But that sort of satisfaction must be common in the day when, as St. Paul says, "the Lord will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each man have his praise from God."

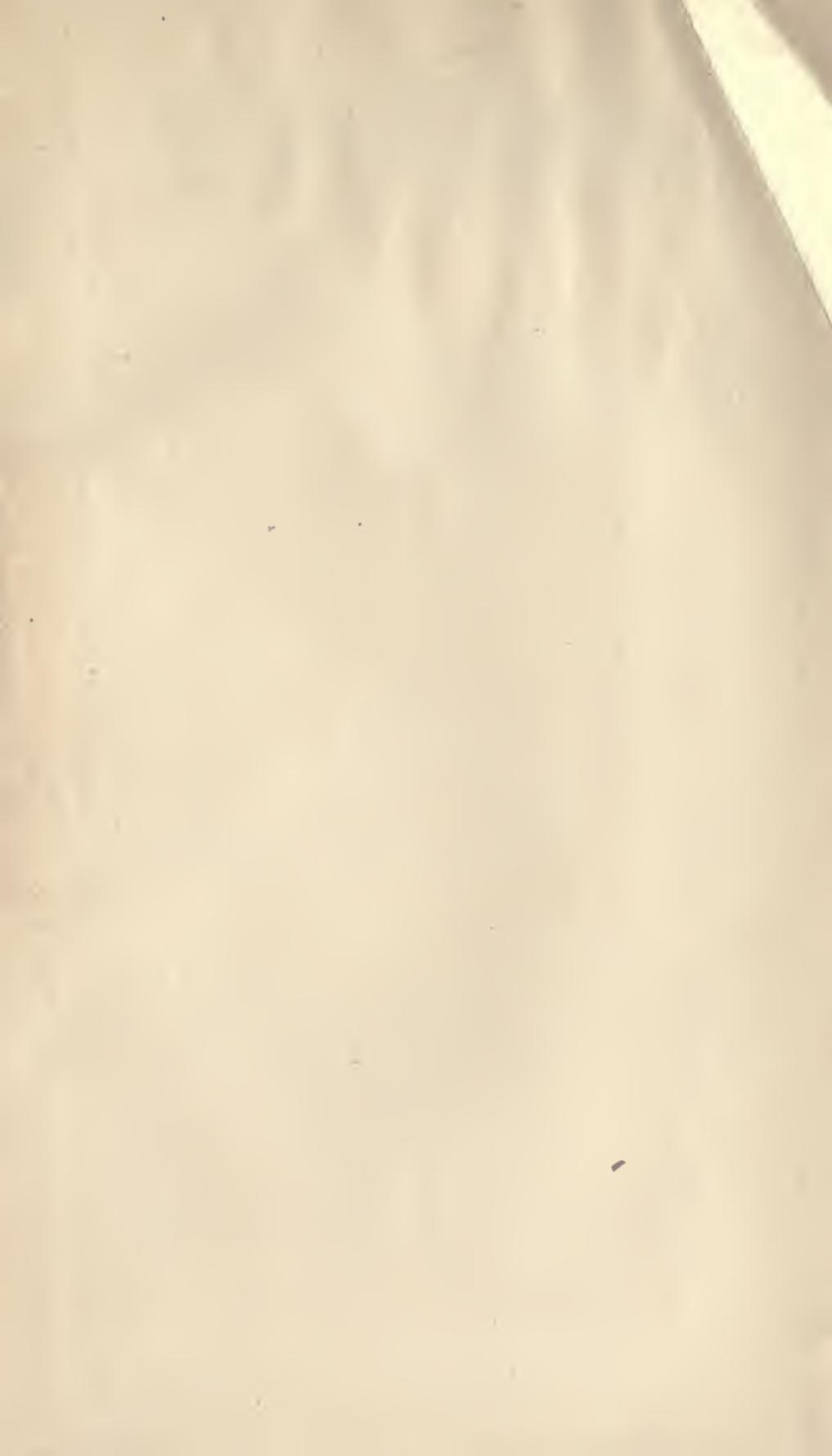
Another special element of restfulness will be connected with the judgment—the Divine government will be vindicated. A great deal of criticism on the course of God in this world has been indulged. Clouds and darkness lie heavy even about the mountain summits where God has revealed himself to men. Theologians have attempted to reduce the weight and seriousness of unanswered questions. They have made many suppositions, and sometimes the suppositions have produced more disquiet than they have allayed

Sometimes men say: if our theory of what God ought to do and will do, shall be accepted, then God may be the good being he is said to be; otherwise not. There is a security which sinks its foundations deeper than in any theory of ours. The Saviour, who loved us and died for us, is to determine the character, and so the destiny of all men. We may be sure that his decision will make all the processes of the Divine government to seem just and good from the beginning. For let us remember that the final thing in the God's revelation of himself is not the disclosure of his power, but of his judgment, his righteousness.

The dominant impression, then, given us in the Scriptures as regards the great day, is not that it is a day in itself to be dreaded. As far as it is concerned, it is intended to bring to light. It should be, then, the fairest and brightest of all the days in human history. This is eminently the Christian conception. For, says John, "Herein is love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love." For love rests in the integrity and grace of him who shall sit upon that throne. The thing to be feared is the impenitent, ungrateful, unappreciative, unyielded heart that goes forward into the brightness of that

day. It is evident that such a heart cannot be bold there. For, how true are those other familiar words!—"Every one that doeth ill hateth the light and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved." Is, then, the light hateful? By no means. "Truly, the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." It is only the wrong will that changes the aspect. Even the rustling of a leaf has been said to bring terror to the guilty man. But what harm is there in the rustling of the leaf? Some of our hymns dwell much on the dread character of the final issues. They express one side of a great fact. They tell us of "the pomp of that tremendous day." But, really, the tremendous day is the present. For the judgment that is to be will be only the disclosure and consummation of that which is taking place hour by hour.





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